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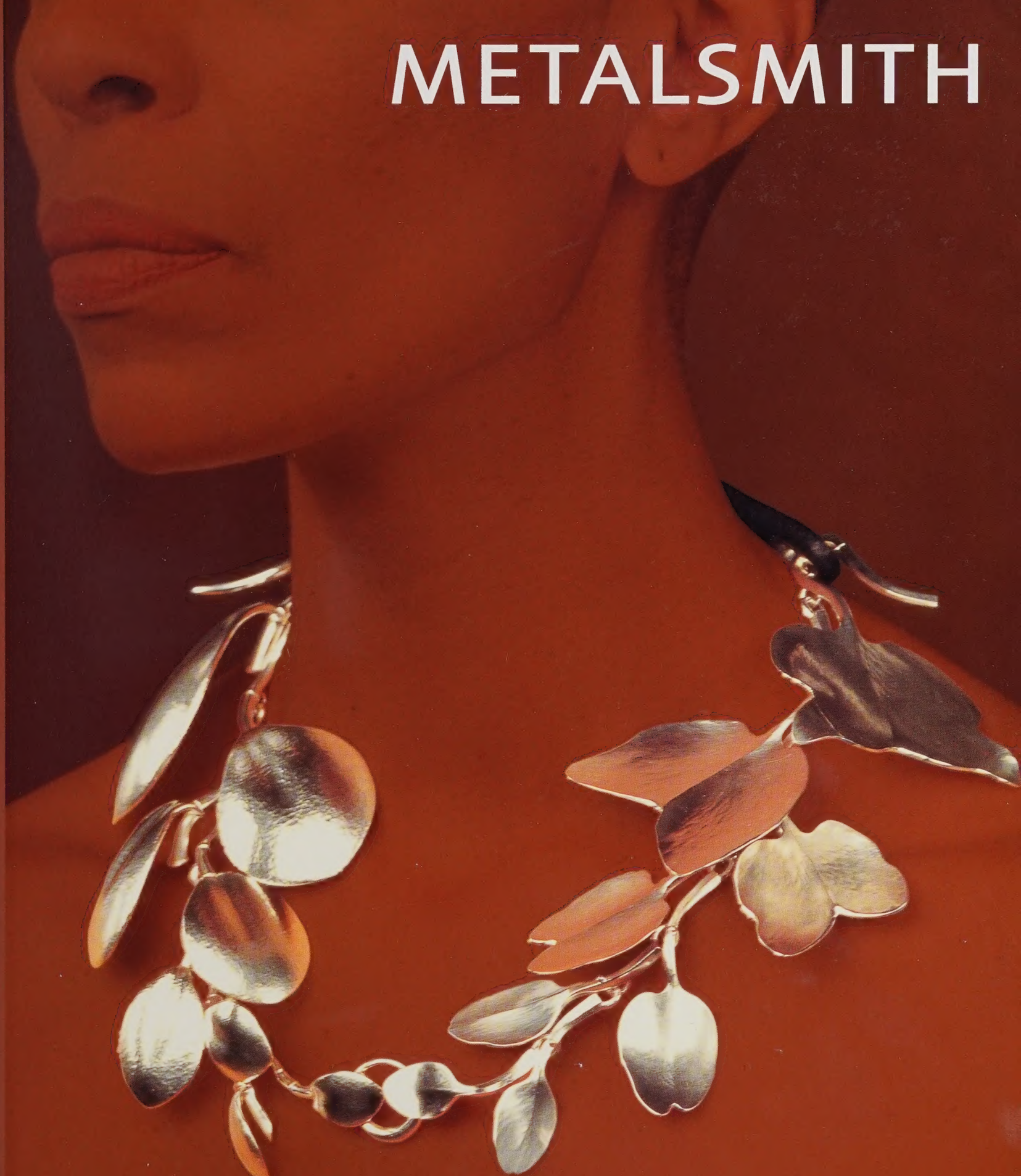

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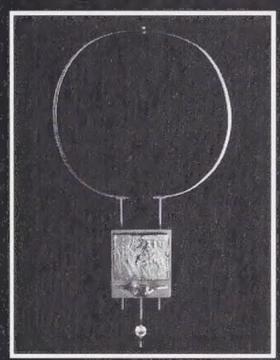

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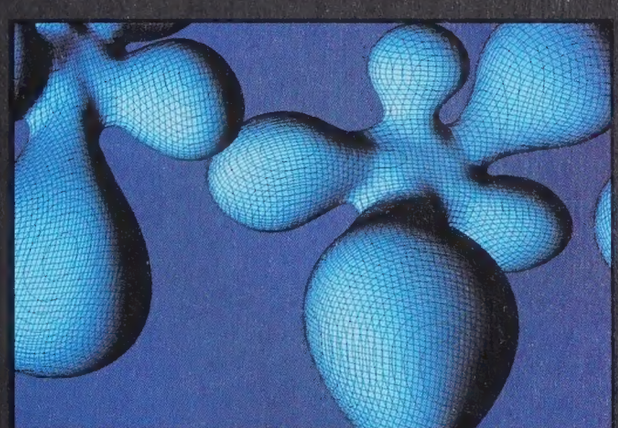

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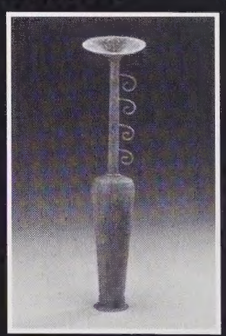

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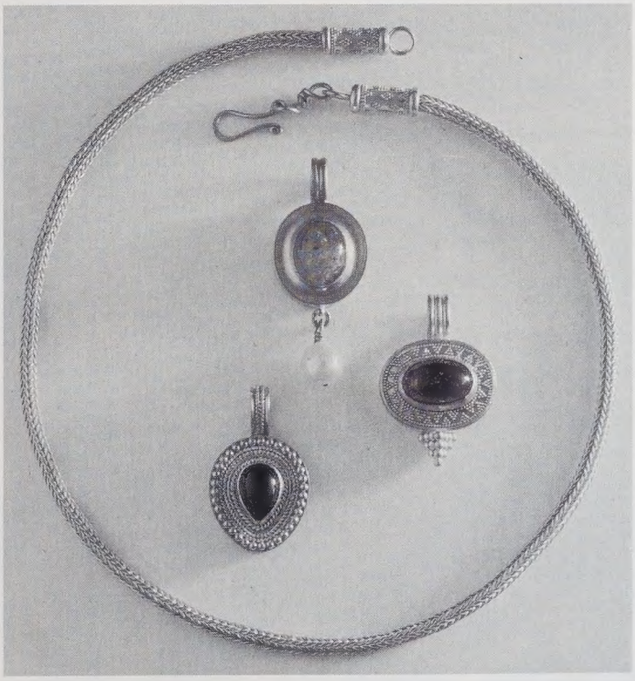

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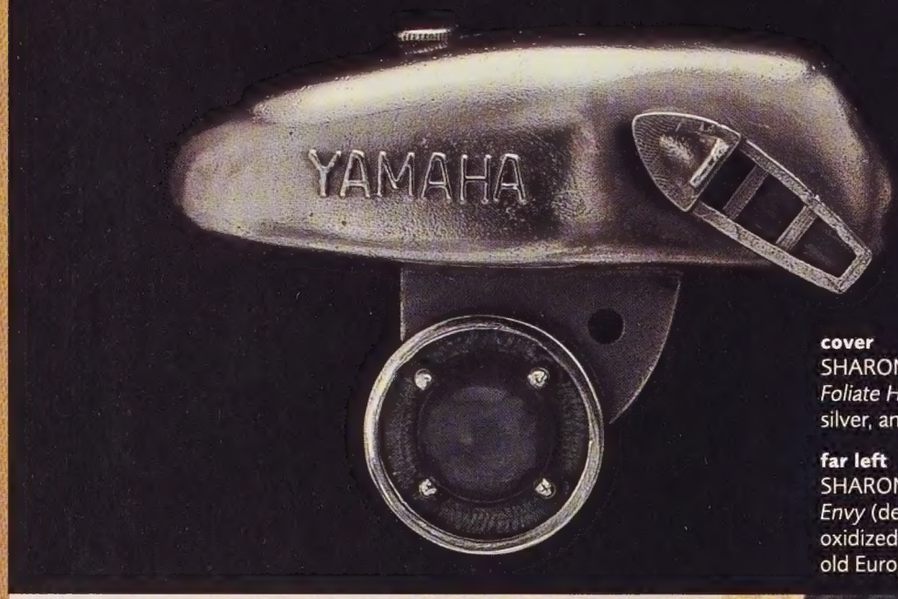

cover
SHARON CHURCH
Foliate Harness, 1997
silver, antler

far left
SHARON CHURCH
Envy (detail), 1997
oxidized sterling, antler, old European diamonds

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bottom right
Poke bag with Gold Nuggets, c. 1850
Photograph by Catherine Buchanan
Courtesy Oakland Museum History Department

top
J. FRED WOELL
Adrift, 1992
silver, moonstone
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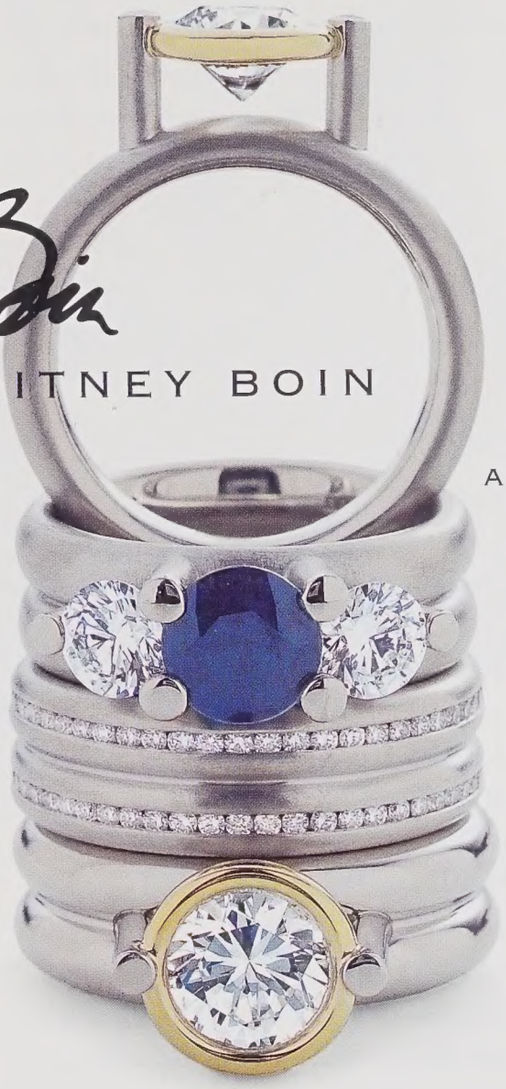

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FROM THE EDITOR

FRANK LEWIS

In my study of the history of art I invariably find that audiences have always brought and continue to bring a certain amount of baggage to their confrontation with a work of art or craft. Lately in the art history classes which I teach, I have been using the phrase "habits of encounter" to describe this baggage. I try to insure that the term is understood to include the vagaries of the historical moment, prejudices, taste, education, social and private expectations, unconscious desires and responses, a familiarity with other similar objects, and an awareness of what other members of the audience might expect or think based on their previous encounters with similar objects. Of course, for any member of the audience, some of these things are not necessarily thought out or logical, and many of them may be based on misunderstanding and either bringing too much or too little information to bear.

The term remains useful, however, because I hope that it allows students to understand that an object of art/craft is a bit like an comet in space; while it has certain objective characteristics and materials, it is always being influenced by numerous and changing unseen forces, perpetually being illuminated by different sources, and constantly shifting its relationship to those sources of illumination.

I think that the most effective criticism and history never treats the object as fixed or absolute in meaning; instead, good criticism rather carefully and somewhat self-consciously plots an object's particular position and meaning at a moment in time. On the other hand, this notion of criticism does not validate an *anything goes* assessment of a piece. A work of art does not mean anything we want it to. Our habits of encounter as both artists and audiences are informed and limited by historical, biological, and spiritual conditions. And no matter how brilliant, creative, *avant garde* or skilled an artist may be, he or she cannot completely undo past meanings, relations, and audiences' assumptions: i.e., despite its long history as a decorative element, no one can use a swastika in their work without having to accept and take responsibility for the most recent historical associations of that form.

Good criticism and historical writing should help to expose these various habits of encounter. And while it is exigent that a piece of writing only focus on a few habits at a time–formal, social, historical, and aesthetic–all of those approaches contribute to an understanding of the complexity and wonder of a work of art and craft. No matter how complete and learned a Freudian discussion of a work might be, it does not invalidate a exegesis of style or technique. Though some may balk at a Marxist discussion of a craft object, it serves as an important if necessarily limited discussion of some of the characteristics which make a work rich and complex.

Anyone who says that only an immediate perception of an object is all that matters, or that form is the only thing that is eternal in a work limits that work rather than explicates it. Even someone's personal response to a work, no matter how naïve or ill formed that response may seem to be, aids us in understanding some of the habits of encounter that particular work elicits.

This inclusiveness does not elide issues of quality or value. It simply makes those questions and the answers they produce more informed. Finally, I think, it shows us all that certain works of art and craft will surely exhaust viewers long before those works are ever themselves exhausted.

FCL

METALSMITH

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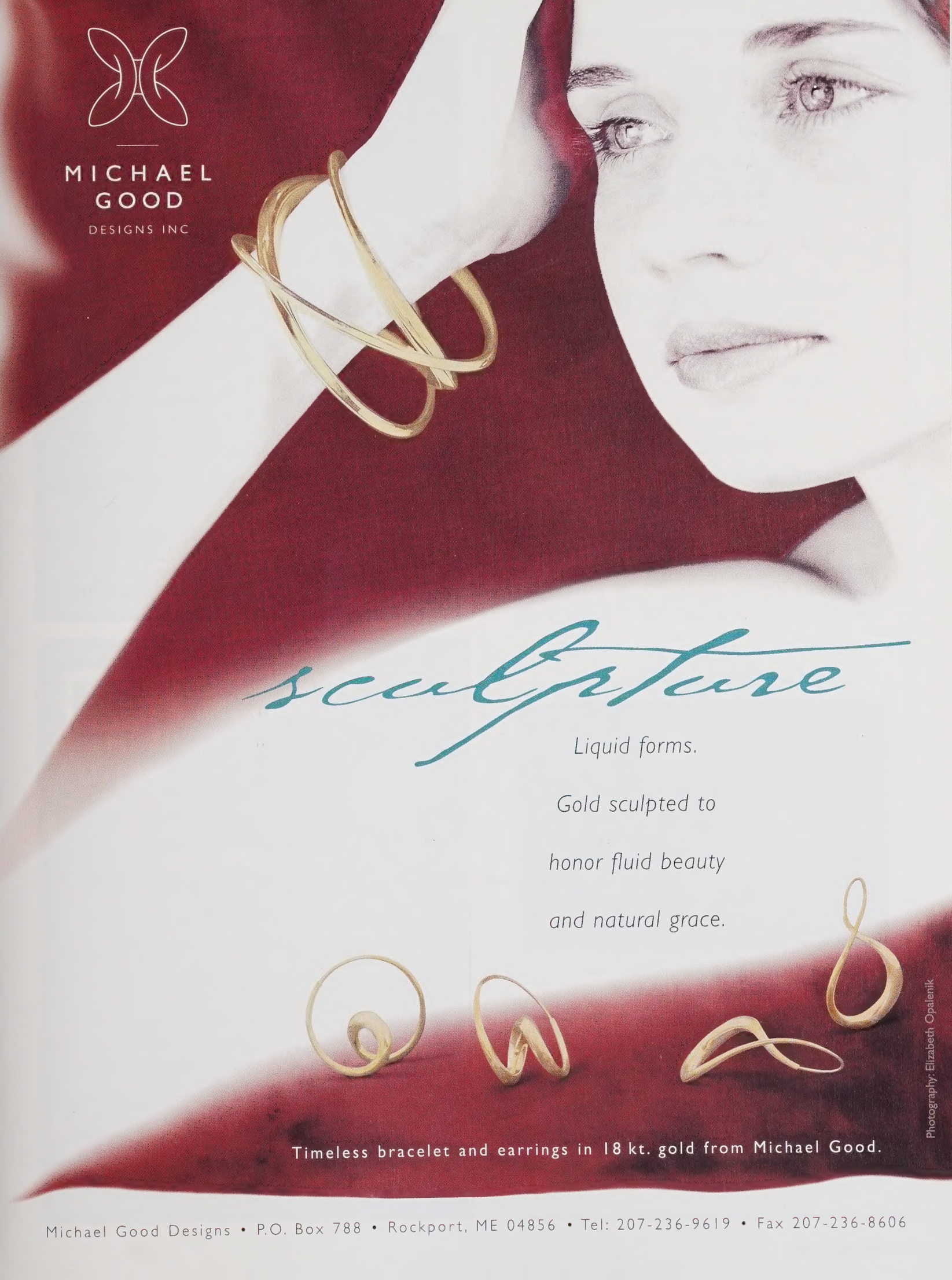
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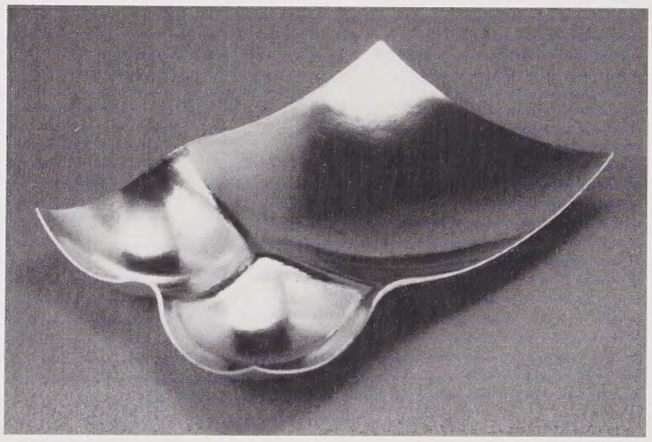

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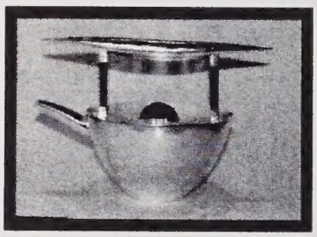

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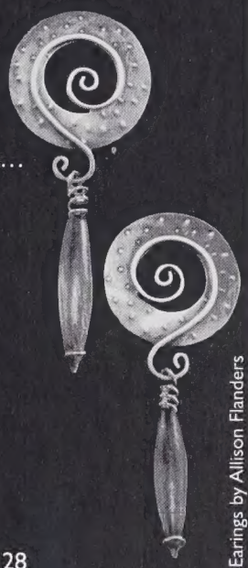

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VIEW FROM THE BENCH

TEXT BARBARA STUTMAN

Re-forming Identity

In our society there is a tacit understanding of what is and what is not appropriate body adornment and craft. Because of this those who make jewellery and functional objects are well positioned to create pieces that are beyond people's expectations, pieces that can surprise and throw audiences off balance, hopefully inducing a jolt of re-cognition that can lead to new and surprising insights.[1] I have been noticing more and more work by contemporary jewellers and metalsmiths who use such de-centering strategies to drive home their concern with the oppressive characterizations of women that permeate our society. Successful work of this sort can be a potent vehicle for "social criticism and psychic change."[2]

Much of what goes into shaping us as men and women is learned from messages provided by the society in which we live. We begin to form our identities as we see ourselves through the eyes of our families, and we continue the process as our world expands to include other people and external forces. Among these influences are the ubiquitous mass media and advertising images that bombard us "with the multitude of representations of what we may become."[3] These have a constant and powerful impact because they often become the ideals against which we compare ourselves.

It is important to understand that these images are constructed not to merely reflect or reproduce reality but to *actively* create particular beliefs about the world. Unfortunately the advertising world and the media continue to promote the long-held belief that a woman's worth is determined by her physical desirability and by the pre-eminence of her urge to be a devoted wife and mother. In so doing they perpetuate Western society's stereotypical and limited vision of what women are and what they are capable of being.

These persuasive characterizations are fueled by a consumer culture at its worst, one that deliberately plays on people's insecurities as a way of pressuring them to conform to cultural ideals that are fictitious and oppressive constructions. Consider the following advertisement promoting flavored bodywash that I came across while glancing through a mainstream women's magazine.

Over a background of rose petals evocative of female genitalia the ad intones: "What do women want? We want to be delicious." It would seem that in their quest to be attractive to men, women must not only smell good but they must taste good as well! The underlying message is a sinister one because it tells us that women must mask their natural odours in order to be enjoyed fully by men. Talk about playing on insecurities!

Distorted and unattainable images of female desirability and worth prevail because they make it seem *only natural* that women must work constantly to smell, look, and act "womanly" in order to attract and hold onto a man. This labor in turn seems necessary because our society maintains that single women are incomplete and unfulfilled.

Advertisements, articles, movies, and television programs tell us over and over again that women should focus their energy on improving their appearances and caring for families rather than on developing their individual characters and talents. Comparing oneself to the thousands of impossibly tall, thin, blemish-free, and poreless computer-adjusted images of women is an exercise designed to work to women's insecurity. After all the aim is to encourage us to spend money. Many girls and women come to resent or feel ashamed of their all-too-real faces, bodies, and psychic needs, resulting in hours spent shopping and at the gym, conditions such as anorexia and bulimia, and/or multiple plastic surgeries to correct things that never needed correcting in the first place.

There is a growing number of metalsmiths who comment eloquently and provocatively on such issues in their work. Willy Scholten decries Western society's established standards of desirability by making a case for an inherent beauty, creating images of women that unabashedly refuse contemporary categorizations such as sexy. The works highlight women's *supposed* imperfections – their very real and unsymmetrical bodies that are under attack for being not normal and not desirable.

Sandra Bonazoli's *Measuring Cup*, 1995 demonstrates incisively that women are being ill-served not only by the media but also by the medical establishment who, through its promotion of cosmetic surgeries, would have us believe that our bodies can be reformed into *perfection*. Bonazoli addresses both the construction and consumption of images of women as sexual beings and of male appetites, often making her point with trenchant pieces whose metal parts serve as molds for home-baked female (or should that be male?) fantasy figures.

Erika Ayala Stefanutti's seductively beautiful, pierced-copper cake and candy dishes surprise us when we recognize that the source of the cutouts is pin-up silhouettes. These objects serve up the server in order to satisfy people's appetites. Julia Jiannacopoulos expresses her concern with culturally imposed gender roles in a different way: the jewels in her *American* series make a mockery of our romantically idealized version of wedded bliss – they are fashioned from soap, lint, linens, and food with nary a diamond in sight.

Honest and effective works are unique expressions of their creators' interests and concerns, be they aesthetic, social, political, historical, psychological, philosophical, or other; they result from the maker's engagement with the world around her. Even though many in our society continue to insist that people who create jewellery and functional objects should shed their extra-aesthetic interests outside the studio door and focus on aesthetics in their work, there will continue to be those who make well-conceived jewellery and objects that have the ability to make us think.

---

[1] Lucy R. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1990, 201-2. Lippard writes: "In modern societies it is most often artists who . . . are expected to do the unexpected."

[2] Lippard, 202.

[3] Victor Burgin in Sandy Nairne, *State of the Art: Ideas & Images in the 1980s*. London: Chatto & Windus., 1990, 154.

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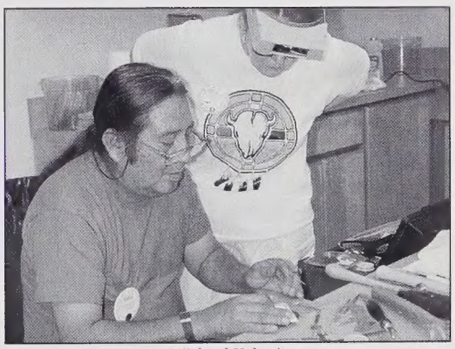

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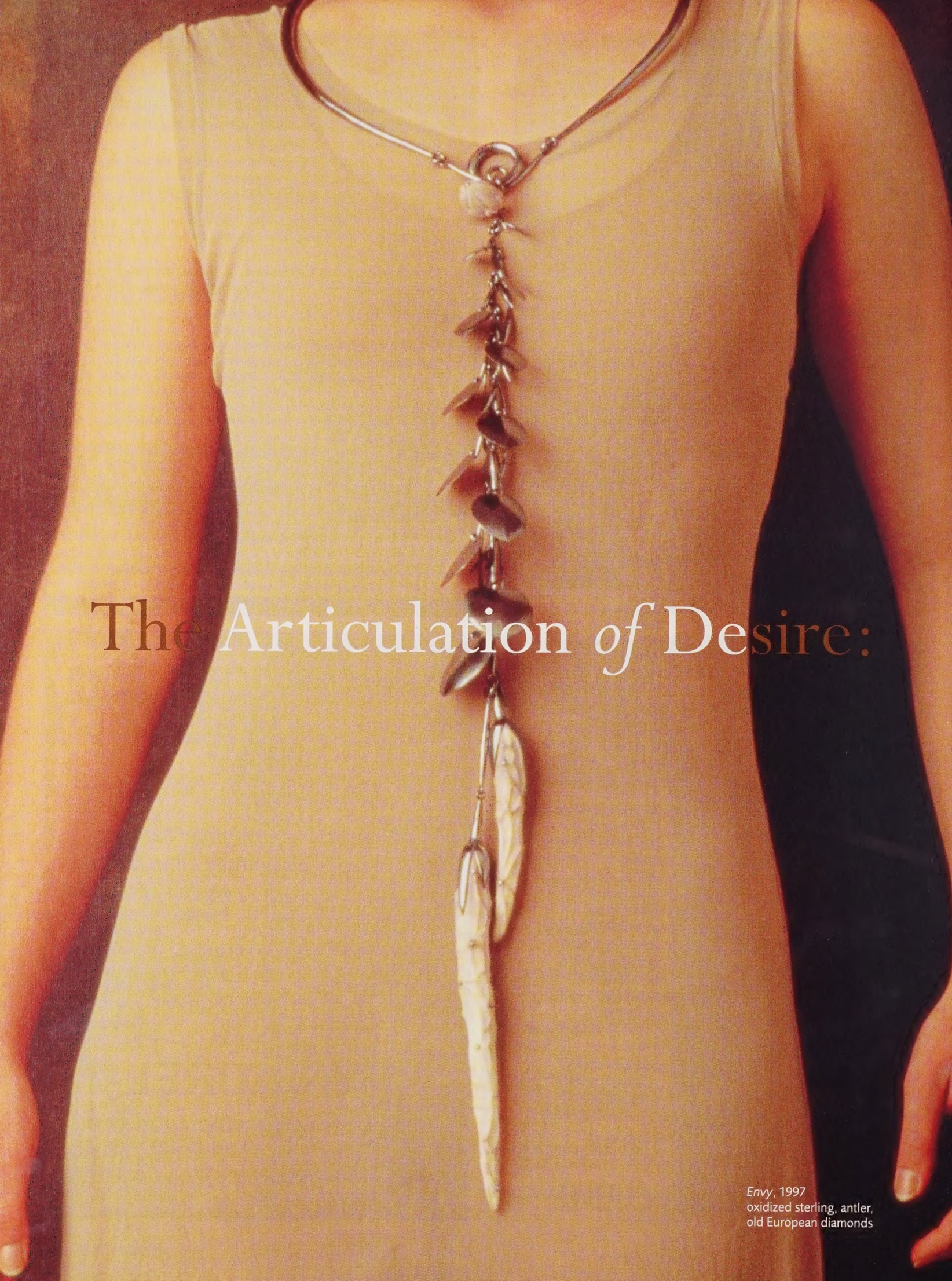

The Articulation *of* Desire:

Envy, 1997
oxidized sterling, antler,
old European diamonds

"Art and Nature, the two great manifestations in the world surrounding us, are so intimately related to one another that it is impossible to think of one without the other...."[1]

Karl Nierendorf

The Jewelry *of* Sharon Church

Jewelry is "the psychic armoring of the human form."[2]

Sharon Church

Foliate Harness, 1997
silver, antler

Heavy silver leaves curl around the neck and, standing a little away from clavicle and throat, make their way around the body to a leather yoke lying comfortably at the back of the neck. Called *Foliate Harness*, the neckpiece was made last year by Sharon Church. Forged, not cast, the leaves are thick and substantial. The right side descends, and the left appears to ascend while opening at the same time, as if extending one hand palm down in benediction, while raising the other in supplication. It is as much about the process of making as it is about the ostensible subject of growth and renewal. Lying awkwardly in a box it is striking, but on the body it is alive. Wearing it is like crawling inside foliage. Even the jump rings are tapered; everything is curved and moving. Beautiful planish marks are left visible, so that a thrumming of energy buzzes in the animated ovals. The splayed positioning of the largest leaf suggests an unbearable vulnerability in its spread-eagled posture. Looking at it longer, tulip poplars seem to take a balletic leap into the future.

Craftspeople probably now agree that materiality is the defining characteristic of craft and that transcendence, the quality by which we recognize *art*, inhabits the physical object. The object then interacts with the body; it is made (primarily) *by hand*. Sharon Church, by virtue of making the body and the bodies of natural growing things her subject, might be said to *embody* the craft of metalworking. Her work also embodies a pair of principles which have lately come to the attention of craft scholars and which have to do with the intrinsic meaning of handwork and the materiality of craft. These principles are "the workmanship of certainty" and "the workmanship of risk."

The above ideas were first posited in 1968 by British woodworker David Pye in *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, and recently examined by Polly Ullrich in *The New Art Examiner*. The workmanship of certainty has to do with mass production, with the emphasis on production. "You design, you prototype, you test your prototype and you try to iron out all the production problems before you set production into being."[3] The workmanship of risk, by contrast, has everything to do with individual *making*, and the very real risks involved in fabricating. "Can the worker spoil the job at any moment?"[4] The *frisson* of appreciation that greets an object like *Foliate Harness* or its companion *Envy* derives from our collective, though frequently unspoken, appreciation of the workmanship of risk: the threat of a misplaced hammer blow underlies a kind of tension in apprehending the work. If "mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual," handwork, by extension, remains imbued with ritual, even if it is a private ritual for the maker.[5] The impossibility of mechanically reproducing Church's work means that all the ritual remains, that the history of the hammer blows lives on, contributing to the sense of immediacy. One is not distanced, however subtly, from the work by its having been reproduced.

The impossibility of mechanically reproducing Church's work means that all the ritual remains, that the history of the hammer blows lives on, contributing to the sense of immediacy.

When an artist lives a long life, stylistic changes are so apparent that it becomes possible to divide the work into phases and to describe it in terms of those phases. The first phase is often characterized by its similarity to the artist's teachers, mentors, or predecessors. Gradually the work becomes more idiosyncratic, eventually developing into a signature style. For example, Picasso's early paintings are indistinguishable from other turn-of- the-century post-impressionists; Beethoven's early sonatas sound a lot like Mozart's.

So-called "third period" works may be said to share some of the following characteristics: ". . . they are often unconventional in form, and appear to be striving to achieve a new kind of unity between elements which at first sight are extremely disparate. . . . [Also] they seem to be exploring remote areas of experience which are intrapersonal or suprapersonal rather than interpersonal. That is, the artist is looking into the depths of his own psyche. . . ."[6] At the same time, works of art reflect the principle of simultaneity. That is, every idea (in this case, object) looks forward and backward at the same time. In this way, an artist's work may reflect as well as anticipate a world-view.

Sharon Church is connected to her past with Albert Paley, Earl Pardon, and Hans Christensen, but as a mature artist she looks within to life-altering events to inform works that speak of growth, loss, and renewal. Recent works bristle with life, embracing a pan-Eros that is surely what Freud had in mind as a powerful life force.

A good example of this principle is *Envy,* a tantric neckpiece that was the first product of Church's 1997 sabbatical. A large, forged, heart-shaped neckpiece tapers to a swoop of heavy wire from which pend a carved flower and a cascade of oxidized silver leaves or petals; at the end hangs a pair of diamond-studded, heavily veined phalluses carved from deer antler. The leaves may not be the product of any recognizable vine or tree, but they are imbued with an animated essential *leaf-ness*. With its construction based on Alexander Calder's sculptures, the entire neckpiece is cantilevered so that the leaves not only ripple down the entire torso, but, when reversed and held upside down, they fan out, perfectly balanced. Such is the balance of form, content, and materials that each element carries its own authority. The curvy feminine tendrils (a legacy of Philip Fike's fibulas by way of Albert Paley's vines) introduce a pale carved flower, which contrasts in color, texture and emotionality. The antler is pale and porous, the metal – metallic and dark. The leaves, not autumn leaves, flat and dry, but fat new leaves, tumble down, straining to catch the sunlight. With the eye engaged in the quiet eddy of the dark leaves, the pointed white "roots" come as a shock. They are, in fact, an oversized version of spent tulip poplar pods, but the phallic reference is unambiguous. Nature everywhere employs basic forms, and Church has become emboldened to represent them. Not interested in mere anatomical correctness, Church appreciates the rich symbolic communication of forms that are "so lush and female and . . . so wonderfully male. That's what the floral world is all about."

These two pieces, *Envy* and *Foliate Harness*, embody many of the issues that have engaged Sharon Church for some time: in her words, "sensuality, material content, image, movement, durability, wearability, preciousness, carved form, power, and beauty." She might have added gravity and geometry, death, decay, and renewal. While her work has always been lively and sensual, with a love for and mastery of many materials, within the past five years it has deepened.

Beginning in her senior year at Skidmore College, against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and the burgeoning Women's movement, Church took her first jewelry class with Earl Pardon and embarked on the first of several significant relationships with powerful teachers. "Earl taught very basic processes that could lead through modular construction to very complex forms. He was a modernist in that respect. It gave me a lot in terms of movement and wearability." From Pardon she learned "the economy of repetition," the "value of surprise," and "the workmanship of risk."

In graduate school at RIT (School for American Craftsmen, Rochester Institute of Technology), she was fortunate to work with Albert Paley and Hans Christensen. There she acquired the metalworking skills she had missed at Skidmore, through hollowware, and developed an expressive vocabulary in forging form and line. From Hans Christensen she learned the "workmanship of certainty"; from Paley, she learned "to control the material by being at one with the material." One can see ghosts of Paley's vines and tendrils in Church's own confidently forged vines, adding a dark and rich female undertone to Paley's ornamentalism. If Paley's was already "an organic, raw view of naturalism," Church enlarged that view, in the way that looking through a small aperture gives way to a larger vista.[7]

These formative years also provided the incubation for a number of ideas and processes to which Church has returned. Her considerable rendering skills, a love of wood, particularly ebony, and a facility for carving (essentially rendering three-dimensionally) have continued to be a part of her creative processes, which she describes as "my endeavor to give life to form."

Once out of graduate school Church continued to draw and carve, as a way *into* herself without the structure of school and influence of powerful teachers. Her ability to plumb the world around her is evidenced by a number of pieces based on drawings of otherwise unremarkable grapefruit seeds. Despite a lack of clear career goals at the time, she remained confident and open to any number of life's possibilities. Hired by Earl Pardon to teach at Skidmore, she returned to the nurturing environment she had enjoyed as an undergraduate.

Living in Saratoga she taught and began the process of discovering her own voice as she continued to explore techniques and concepts, notably fusing and etching, and bead- and fiber-related con-

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Envy (detail), 1997
oxidized sterling, antler,
old European diamonds.

structions. During this time she did a lot of drawing, an exercise that has been a way for her to connect with herself; it is for her direct, immediate, and intrinsically satisfying. Drawing is drawing, not something preparatory to fabricating. The drawings are hyperrealistic renderings, whereas sketches to be made into three-dimensional work are gestural. "When I'm drawing from nature it's to understand the form and when I'm drawing from my imagination it's to understand my own interests. They're separate activities. So when I go to the bench, having done those sort of imaginative drawings, there's enough information that I can draw at the bench. Except that I'm using pieces of metal."

Returning to the source of her inspirations, she started to make work that was harder to wear, grittier, and "had a stronger odor." It became more direct, more elemental, more chthonic, loamy, and dense.

While teaching, Church gave herself the assignment of executing a piece a week, which resulted in a fertile period of empirical and playful discovery of what metal would and would not do. She heated up silver and dropped molten gold into it. Thinking she had lost the gold, she oxidized it, and the gold came up. Another time, she "threw it into some nitric acid" then annealed and pickled it to retrieve the gold. She cut silver up like a puzzle and drew gold threw the seams. Gradually gaining control over the metal, she created geologic patterns that had the spontaneity of the drawings, the "life" in the metal she had been looking for.

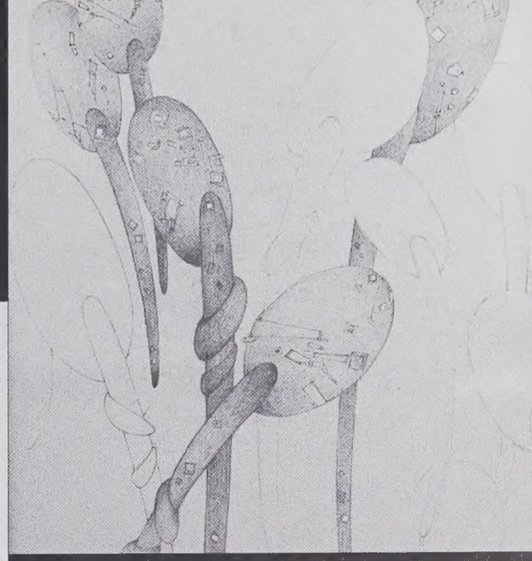
Another "disastrous project" had far-reaching implications and was a failure only in that it evolved far from her original intent. Working with fiber techniques and red seed beads found in a "craft shoppe," Church attempted to construct a necklace in which the beaded threads would be gathered up into a tumbling wave of color. The pesky monofilament would not lie down, could not be "gathered up," and so it become a six-foot hand whip, which, when hung from the ceiling, cascaded attractively in the style of many fiber constructions of the 1970s. But it was most definitely not a necklace.

This mistake eventually led to a highly successful line of limited-edition beaded necklaces with elaborately constructed gold and silver clasps, which became her signature work in the 1970s (the second phase). Church estimates she made about 350 of these necklaces. Colorful, feminine, and assertive, they provided a window for a new collector to begin to understand art jewelry; not coincidentally for the times, they represent art that a woman might buy for herself, thus eliding the commodification of traditional precious jewelry. Compared to the cantilevered leaf forms in *Envy* and the carefully engineered *Foliate Harness*, the beaded necklaces appear merely decorative. But that was what they were intended to do. Bold clasps complement the jostling, vermiform streams of sparkling color. The interlocking strands are punctuated with larger beads, which stand out like the segmented bodies of earthworms. Always wearable, over time they became more resolved. Eventually Church started thinking about chaos and structure in the beads, and she went back to drawing and to nature. Returning to the source of her inspirations, she started to make work that was harder to wear, grittier, and "had a stronger odor." It became more direct, more elemental, more chthonic, loamy, and dense.

After three years of production, Church wearied of the isolation of bench work, and in 1980, in one of those serendipitous occurrences to which she seems preternaturally available, she was offered a job at University of the Arts in Philadelphia, where she remains a committed and nurturing teacher.

One of the occupational benefits of teaching is the feedback loop of dialogue and communication, "asking yourself continually what's essential for a person to experience or know as a jeweler." By devising projects for students to understand the essentials of weight, movement, and gravity, Church honed her own construction skills. References to organic forms continue to strengthen, and movement, based on principles gleaned from Calder, becomes more pronounced, culminating in the pungent marriage of geometry and biology which characterizes her current work.

The *leafness* of the leaves results from Church's understanding of the fundamental form and function of the original object as well as her materials. In other words, to abstract a form you have to know it really well, and to render it convincingly in another medium you have to know what that material can and cannot do. Church's intimacy with nature originates with her garden and the subsequent botanical renderings that imprint in her hand the essential forms of the plants. The garden "is a place



top right
Pencil drawing, 1981

left
Handwhip, 1976
glass beads, monofilament
approx. 6'

of remembrance and preparation. Its forms provide a symbolic language of growth and decay, death and renewal."

Drawing is *sui generis*, that is, not preparatory for a particular piece of jewelry but simply to *know* the form, to get an idea of "the life force of the plant." Plant energy comes from within and erupts out. A whole life cycle may be expressed on one branch of an orchid. Church refers to the work of the early twentieth-century German photographer Karl Blossfeldt, whose greatly enlarged close-ups of plant parts also serve as inspiration for her colleagues Bruce Metcalf, in a witty and cerebral way, and Valerie Mitchell, in a gestural, naturalistic way. In a similar way, Henri Rousseau and Robert Mapplethorpe had abstracted from plants the forms they wanted, without regard to the plants' indigenous environments.

Within the last ten years Sharon Church's work has achieved a kind of maturity and voluptuousness which characterizes the "third period" of the creative life. Beginning with the birth of her daughter in 1987, she became interested in symbols and the unconscious.

Church used the occasion of her impending motherhood to reflect on the universality and particularity of her experience, grounded as it was in her connection with all things female. While pregnant and confined to bed she carved and painted wooden brooches, continuing to make jewelry in a safe way and returning to the wood she had always enjoyed. It was no accident that the forms at this time were archetypically female, for example, "a rock with a vaginal cleft to insure fertility." Later she discovered this to be a universal female symbol, as basic as a plowed furrow. After reading about universal female imagery, Church became interested in the writings of Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist who coined the term "archetypes," referring to the presence of certain universal symbols throughout the world.[8] Reading Jung gave Church a vocabulary for her observations, and she thought about developing a form language that would have a universal vocabulary. Although she identifies with a powerful female iconography, there is nothing of the mushy New Age Mother Goddess imagery in her work. Rather, her "'hope is to make work that calls out certain strengths associated with the feminine, especially powers of nurturing, protection and social communion." Motherhood is a powerful experience, one that evokes feelings both fierce and tender. A pair of large *Breast Shield* earrings document this time.

But in the end, nature is the ultimate universal language, and in this, perhaps, is another Jungian connection. For it was over the interpretation of the libido as sexual energy that Jung broke with his mentor Freud.[9] Church follows Jung's constructs without jettisoning the Freudian subtext: she too sees the erotic as a great force in life. In the curl of a fern shoot in early spring she sees one thing "about to become" another.

The "insistence of life" might be said to characterize Church's approach to life and work. Each piece is designed to elicit an intuitive response. The seeming spontaneity of the life-like forms derive from her intimate knowledge of plants, shoots, and leaves garnered through study and repeated drawing, particularly heightened by a move close to the Morris Arboretum in suburban Philadelphia. The drawings address growth, decay, death, and renewal through their foliate imagery. They do not flinch from revealing what is underneath fallen leaves to expose what creeps there. Beauty and ugliness, another Jungian duality, coexist, and much of Church's recent work plumbs the paradox of death in life.

In 1991 Earl Pardon died, and Church commemorated him and their relationship with a brooch of 14k yellow gold, leather, and carved ebony. The range of materials and mastery of fabrication and construction honors object-making, while the imagery of soaring leaves and a bristly heart-shaped pendant carved fully in the round suggests at once the kernel of an idea about to take flight and the classic metaphor of oaks and acorns. There is movement, vitality, and a sensuous materiality in the multi-media "wings" (three kinds of leaves) topped by the nearly universal spiral, symbol of life itself, renewal, the galaxies in space, or the twisting strands of DNA. Church states that the brooch is about "generating and generation, about life and death and life again . . . , about giving and receiving."

These concerns seem eerily prophetic in light of the death of Church's young husband in a bicycle accident in 1993. Two years later when she began to work again, she returned to the soothing familiarity of carving. *It Was the Most Beautiful Day of the Summer* represents beauty almost too painful to look at, the blinding light of late afternoon. A somber, contained ebony brooch with no moving parts, it looks like a cross between a fox's head and a truncated, half-golden heart, with a deep cleft to separate the living from the dead.

The occasion of a brooch show in 1995 gave Church the opportunity and motivation to create "true mourning pieces. . . about magic, hope, renewal, and fear." The triptych *From the Garden* seems a meditation on these themes. *Magic Remains* contains many elements that could be considered characteristic of Church's work: the nature imagery, material contrasts of forged metal leaves adorning carved wooden life forms, and a kind of heart-breaking rendering of life processes. "What's in the earth is ugly, repulsive, and beautiful," the wormy, fetid underbelly without which there is no life. This dense little brooch contains the promise of life in its dangling larval form, a fat, black caterpillar whose curved body wriggles to reach to the golden branch above it. The metaphor of transformation is replayed here as well, in giving life to the wood and choosing the insect whose life cycle literally embodies transformation.

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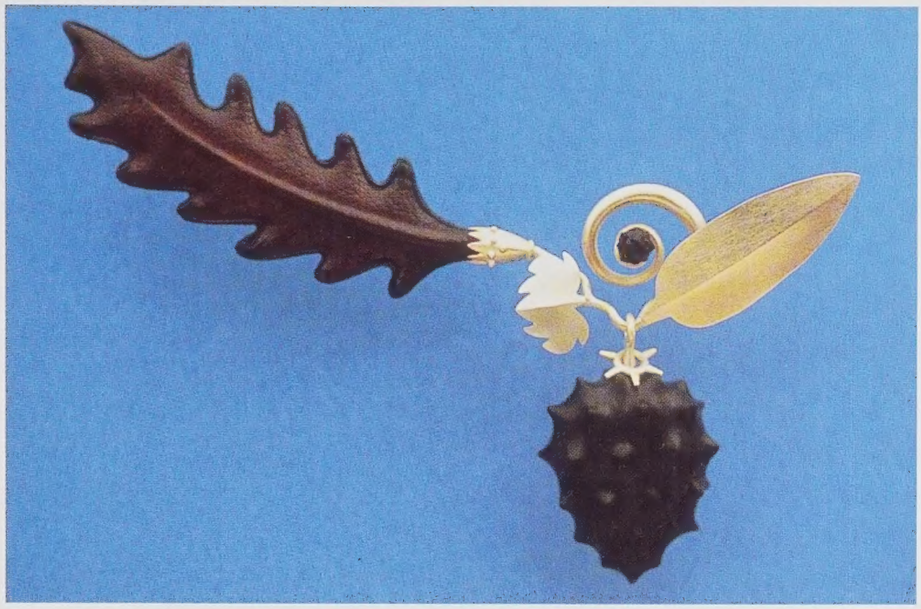
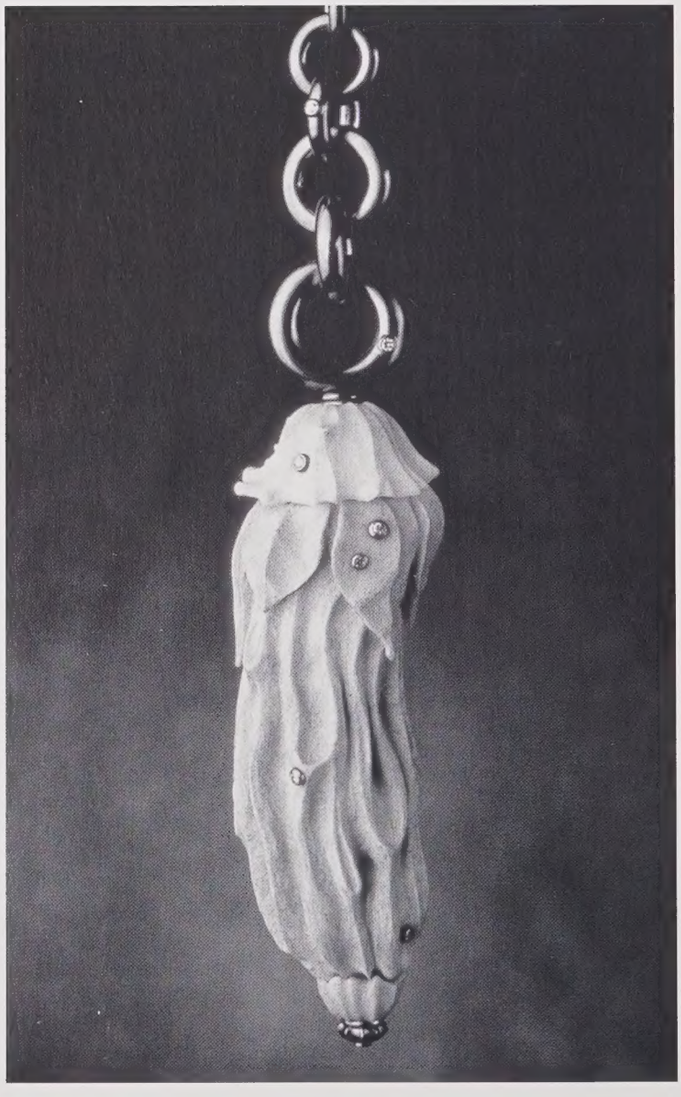


Brooch (In memory of Earl Pardon), 1991
14k yellow gold, leather, ebony

Brooch Triptych: From the Garden, "It Was the Most Beautiful Day of the Summer," 1995
22k yellow gold foil, ebony, 14k yellow gold findings

Magic Remains
14k yellow gold, ebony



Lapsed Hybrid (pendant/bead), 1997
antler, old European cut diamonds, sterling

Gravity remains a key concern for Church as a jeweler. Naturally concerned with the body, she uses a mannequin to determine how things fit; how they hang; how gravity interfaces with geometry in her constructions; why a rotational clasp works on a necklace and not on a bracelet. Movement itself is mesmerizing, and even brooches may have (re)movable parts, in which gravity is key to the design. Church references the history of jewelry by her subtle and well placed use of diamonds. Among other things, diamonds complement movement because they give back light. In *Lapsed Hybrid* the carved antler and massive handmade sterling chain, oxidized a steely hematite-like black, are studded with diamonds. This piece characterizes a number of Church's concerns, including the detumescent squash, movement, and the nearly full-body scaled pendant. Looking at the pendant suggests time-lapse footage of a mouse decomposing.

In carving the antler, Church struggled to get it to look like a collapsed gourd, a simple statement that belies the time spent in conceptualizing what shape that might be. It addresses the "hybrid potential of current life." As a teacher, she is mindful of her responsibility to prepare her students to live in a multicultural world and aware of the differences from the world of Wilmington, Delaware, where she came of age. *Lapsed Hybrid* addresses "the disjuncture of the homogeneity of [Church's] upbringing and the heterogeneity" of her life and her students' lives. She suspects the "sameness" of her past may not be adequate to the task of living in the multicultural present.

The jewelry that Sharon Church makes might be considered essentialist in its biological referent; that is, it is *essentially* female because it is connected to a wellspring of creative force, an elemental life force that is germinal. It's what makes tulips open to the sun, milkweed pods expel their contents to the winds, and seed pods collapse with spent energy. Church's forms are botanical and biological, emerging as much from closely observed plants as from elemental life processes such as flowering and senescence. Her phallic forms are full of Eros, pumping blood, though they are not about power and aggression. She connects the phallic form to its underlying affinity with other body shapes: the sac, the intestines, the glistening appendage.

Thinking about Sharon Church's work is like spending time in the natural world with Georgia O'Keeffe, Carl Jung, and 19th-century ornamentalism. However, she avoids the reactionary potential of Jung's concept (woman=nature) by giving her works a *masculine* interpretation by striking metal and by constructing the pieces with an essential geometry. Thus, the work is saved from marginalization into the *feminine* by its toughness. What gives the form its effectiveness is the tension implied in the interpretation of the "female" life-giving energy and the "male" mastery of the material. Her iconic forms, forged from sheet and carved from wood, look inward to connections with women, mothers, and all creative people who look closely into the world around them.

What gives the form its effectiveness is the tension implied in the interpretation of the "female" life-giving energy and the "male" mastery of the material.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith, writer, and a member of Metalsmith's Editorial Advisory Committee. She lives in Highland Park, New Jersey.

1 Karl Nierendorf, in "Introduction to Karl Blossfeldt." *Art Forms in the Plant World*. NY: Dover Publications, 1985.

2 This and all other unattributed quotes courtesy of Sharon Church, in written or verbal communication with the author.

3 Peter Dormer, "Craft and the Turing Test for Practical Thinking." In Peter Dormer, ed. *The Culture of Craft*. Manchester University Press, 1997, p.138.

4 Polly Ullrich, "The Workmanship of Risk." *The New Art Examiner*, April 1998, vol, 25, n. 7, p. 27.

5 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *In Illuminations*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968, p. 224.

6 Anthony Storr, *Solitude*. NY: Ballantine, 1988, p. 174.

7 Gary Griffin, quoted by Robert A. Sobieszek. *Metalsmith*, Fall, 1982, p. 43.

8 See Lucy Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*. NY: The New Press, 1983. Other key Jungian concepts are the division of the world into dualities such as male/female, introvert/extrovert, and the existence of a collective unconscious, a source of ancient memories and shared symbols.

9 Jung believed that the libido represented a creative life force, a concept which Freud thought diluted his idea, but that which made it acceptable to a wider audience.

William McKnight, Died in California on August 12, 1852
one sixth-plate daguerreotype
Collection of Matthew Isenberg

Weighing a Loaded Nugget:

REFLECTIONS *on the* CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

text by MIJA RIEDEL

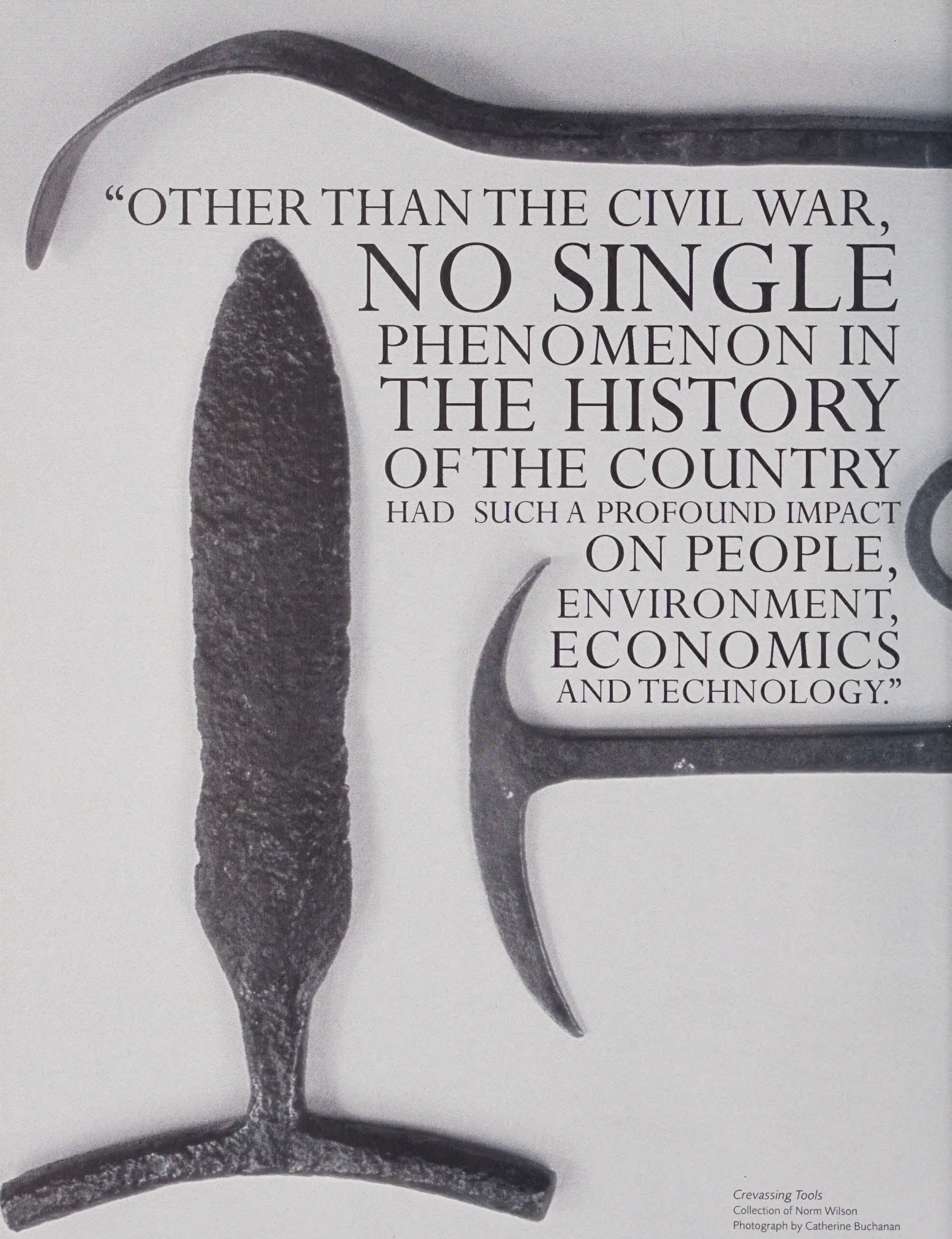
THE LARGEST EXHIBITION IN THE HISTORY OF THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA, "*GOLD FEVER! THE LURE AND LEGACY OF THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH*" COINCIDES WITH THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD AT SUTTER'S CREEK.

Analogous to the mineral itself, the exhibit is reflective and metaphorically rich. Rippling back in time and forward to current headlines, *Gold Fever!* outlines, defines, and redefines the profile of contemporary California.

"The Gold Rush was the formative event in California history in the 19th century. You cannot understand the way this state is today without understanding the dynamics of the Gold Rush. Its legacy is all around us – under our feet, in our rivers, and in our attitudes about what it means to be a Californian," writes L. Thomas Frye, Chief Curator Emeritus of History of the Oakland Museum. "Other than the Civil War, no single phenomenon in the history of the country had such a profound impact on people, environment, economics and technology."[1]

The stern of the *Niantic* towers over the exhibit; the other half of the ship is buried under modern day San Francisco, along with hundreds of others which were simply abandoned in the harbor when their crews jumped ship in search of fortune. The harbormaster estimated that between 1849-1850 alone, 62,000 people arrived in San Francisco from all over the world. The boats which weren't dragged ashore and converted into hotels or stores, or burned in smelting fires, became the city's first landfill, changing the shoreline significantly and making San Francisco "one of the most transformed landscapes on earth".[2]

Before 1769 when the Spanish began colonizing, California



"OTHER THAN THE CIVIL WAR, NO SINGLE PHENOMENON IN THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY HAD SUCH A PROFOUND IMPACT ON PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMICS AND TECHNOLOGY."

Crevassing Tools
Collection of Norm Wilson
Photograph by Catherine Buchanan

was a biologically diverse land, the most culturally and linguistically varied place in all of North America. It was home to more than 300,000 Indian people from 100 different tribes, "diverse collections of societies with distinct cultures and traditions"[3] which had inhabited the area for over 10,000 years. While Native Californians were aware of gold, it had no value for them and was left undisturbed for centuries. Dentalia shells were used as a medium of exchange; grizzlies and salmon were plentiful and revered; over 30 kinds of grasses were harvested for food.

One hundred years before the first 49er arrived, California was international – home to Russian hunters, Spanish missionaries, trappers, traders and great ranching empires owned by Californios. The Spanish had come, as one soldier put it, "For Glory, God and Gold. We came here to serve God, but also to get rich."[4] Within the first hundred years of European contact, disease, abuse, and destruction of the environment had reduced the native Indian population by ninety percent. With James Marshall's discovery of gold in Coloma on January 24, 1848, this already diverse and changing world would begin to transform at a furious rate and with single-minded purpose.

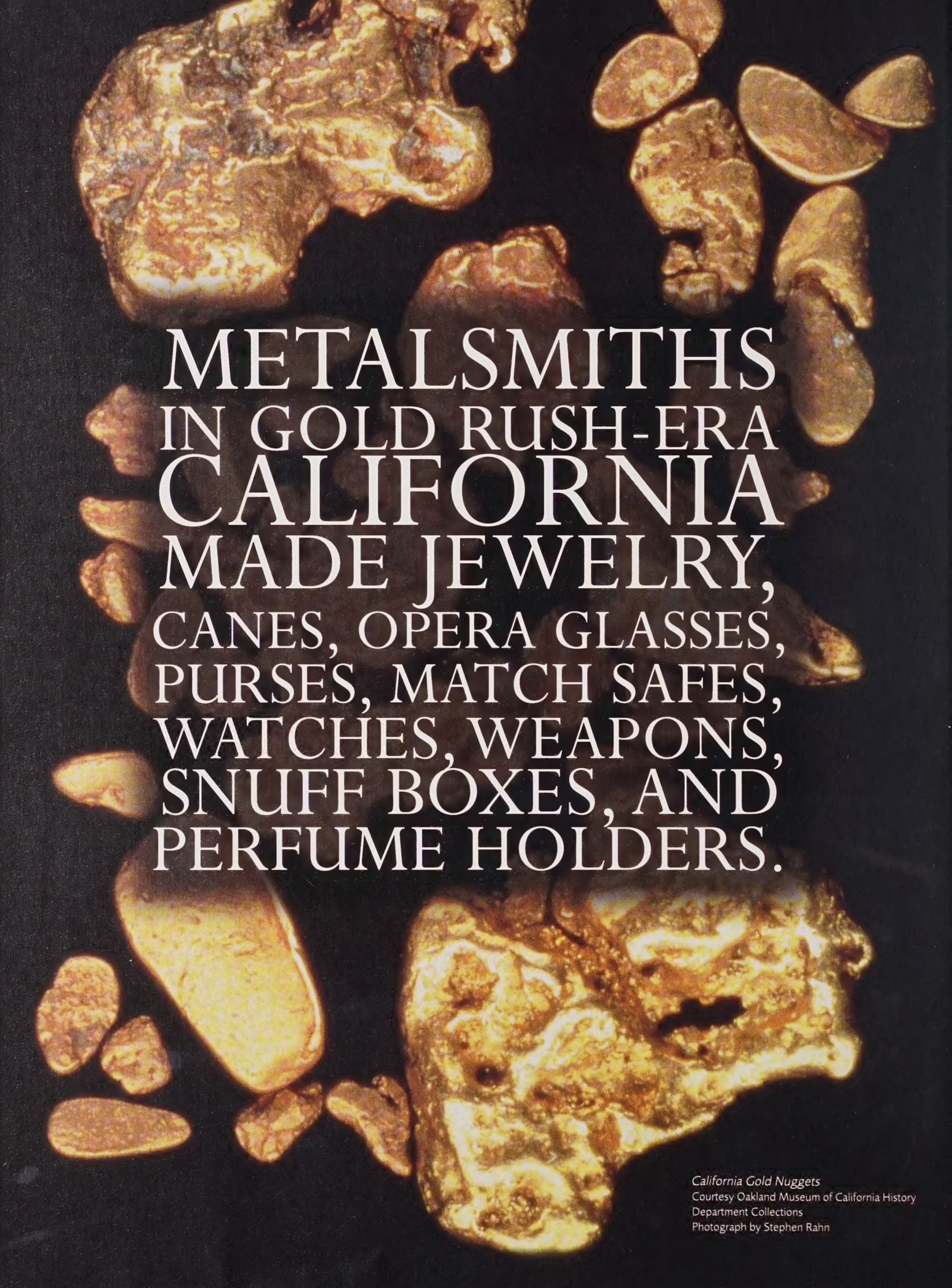
The Museum's exhibit immerses one in the gold rush and offers multiple levels of reflection on the profound changes it set in motion. Interactive displays and thousands of objects offer museum-goers multiple routes of access into the diversity of day to day life in the 1850s. An innovative audio program recreates the age via dramatic readings from gold rush-era diaries, letters, and newspaper accounts, and the appropriate background sounds – steamships, stamp mills, and gold rush music – enhance one's sense of being there.

The single case in the entry room holds a provocative collection of gold objects which invoke contemplation. There is a medal from the 1948 Olympic games in London; coins from a sunken Spanish treasure ship; a gold-plated Oscar – for *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*; gold tomb ornaments from 3rd or 4th century B.C.E. China; a 19th century pocket watch and chain of gold and gold quartz; a pendant adorned with hundreds of delicate, distinct gold granules, dangling from a hand-woven chain; a globe of polka-dotted yellow quartz set in a gold ring entitled *Sunspots*. In the same case and in contrast to its humanly designed incarnations is an example of delicate, filigreed, crystalline gold which miners regarded as "rare and beautiful, jewelry gold, and praised. . . highly."[5]

Gold in its multitudinous guises is presented for our reflection: as mineral; a malleable artist's medium; a "rare and beautiful" natural occurrence; currency; matched with time as valuable commodity; emblem of stardom and success; symbol of the highest achievement; referencing sun and royalty; enduring; sought and coveted multiculturally.

The juxtaposition of symbolically loaded objects and divergent stories conveys the very different Californias that existed before and after Marshall's discovery; the multifarious ways of life which co-existed for a brief time; and the depth and complexity of the gold rush experience. In a room all its own is the original, pea-sized nugget that began the frenzy; a few rooms later hangs one of the enormous iron dredges which helped end it. There are coarse crevassing tools used to dig gold from between rocks, and gold-plated silver and glassware from the city's finest hotel. Full scale tableaux depict the various mining techniques practiced at Miwok, Mexican, Chinese, and Anglo-American camps. The finesse of a log cabin – its "hand-hewn beams and dovetailed corners, fitting together without nails"[6] – contrasts starkly with the grizzly medical kit complete with amputation saw displayed out back. On stage, a filmed version of a period variety show portrays the music, humor, and spectacle of the 1850s.

Metalsmiths in gold rush-era California made jewelry, canes, opera glasses, purses, match safes, watches, weapons, snuff boxes, and perfume holders. A Derringer of wood, steel, and gold (a gift from a state senator to a tax collector) sits alongside an ornate *Jewel Casket* of gold and the highly-favored gold quartz – which was shown at the Paris Expo in 1878, and depicts panoramic views of the American west. One of the



California Gold Nuggets
Courtesy Oakland Museum of California History
Department Collections
Photograph by Stephen Rahn

Gold Brooch
Collection of Ron and Sandra Van Anda, Photograph by Joe Samberg

most elaborate objects is a one-pound commemorative ring presented to President Franklin Pierce by the citizens of San Francisco. Engraved on the band are a California Indian, a miner, and a Californio; elsewhere a grizzly bear, an eagle, a salmon, and other images of California's natural resources are included. Beneath its lid is a grid with nine compartments, each containing a different variety of pure California gold. A gold brooch depicts "all the tools of the miners trade: rocker, pick, shovel, nugget, etc."

Innovators and entrepreneurs of all varieties thrived. One nameless cook earned more than many miners selling $11,000 worth of meat pies cooked over an open fire in a single skillet. Another quick fortune was made selling shovels - once the store owner had bought up every one in San Francisco and more than quadrupled the price. One of the more imaginative '49ers reported his experiences: ". . . a frenzy seized my soul . . . piles of gold rose up before me at every step . . . thousands of slaves bowed to my beck and call . . . myriads of fair virgins contended for my love . . . in short, I had a very violent attack of the gold fever . . .".[7]

Another view of the gold rush is echoed in a February 10, 1881 letter to a Missouri Statesman written by Boone Emigrant, "I need not tell you, that the golden stories of the California gold mines have humbugged thousands . . . A miner's life is one of hardships, toil and exposure . . . No man should think of coming to California to make his thousands or his fortune in a short time. This idea is utterly foolish, and if he does not think so, let him come and learn in the school that all fools have to learn in."[8]

John Sutter – for whom James Marshall worked and on whose land The Nugget was discovered – had come from Switzerland years before to establish a pastoral outpost based on livestock and lumber. His efforts to cover up Marshall's find failed, and he was eventually ruined by the masses tramping across his lands to the gold fields. As editor of *The California Star*, Sam Brannan fanned to a frenzy the very flames Sutter had hoped to quietly extinguish, allegedly marching through the streets of San Francisco with a vile of nuggets, announcing the discovery of gold on the American River.

If one were already in San Francisco when Brannan's paper was headlining Marshall's discovery, there were quick fortunes to be made, but for those *rushing* – for months – to California over land or by sea, the situation was quite different. The surface gold was quickly claimed, and in the 1850s, declining returns meant miners had to move more and more earth for less and less gold. Giant machines replaced individuals panning their own plots, and miners began working for wages. Big machine mining had a staggering impact on the environment. Huge floating dredges running twenty-four hours a day gouged two and a half million tons of earth from California river beds. Hydraulic monitors ripped apart the landscape – blasting away the sides of mountains with water cannons shooting at a force of 5000 pounds. The tons of mercury used to extract the gold escaped into rivers and streams and entered the food chain. Mountain and river habitats were wiped out; streams were buried under 100 feet of gravel. There was massive flooding in orchards and grain fields. In the 1870s, farmers began organiz-

Gold Chest, c. 1875
Courtesy Oakland Museum History Department

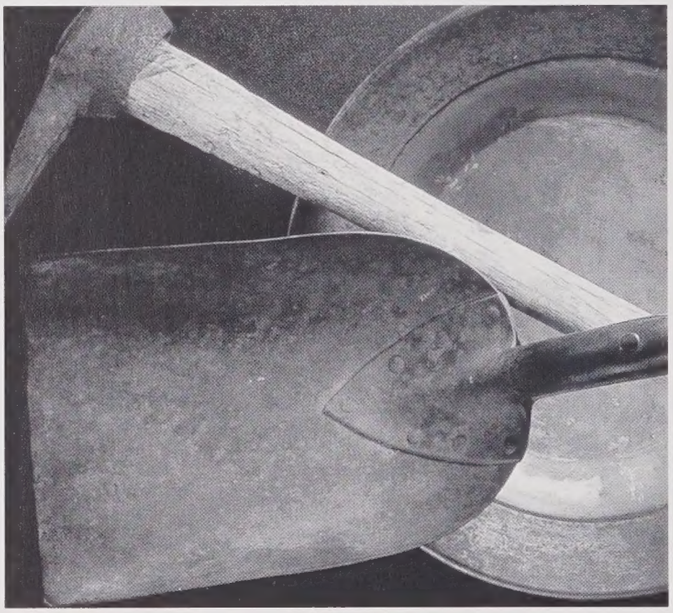
THE LURE OF GOLD HAD MADE CALIFORNIA THE "MOST CULTURALLY AND RACIALLY DIVERSE SOCIETY THE WORLD HAD EVER KNOWN"

The roots of contemporary California are clearly delineated – diversity of cultures, multiplicity of languages, racism, innovation, entrepreneurialism, pollution, conservation, agribusiness, and an influential media. The environmental legacy is rapidly heading full circle - small fortunes paid by current residents for bottled water and farmed salmon, "gold" exchanged for the same natural resources which were destroyed in its harvesting 150 years ago.

Will the insights and tragedies of California in the 1850s have any influence on current events – bilingual education; the information revolution; the manufacture and disposal of nuclear and other toxic wastes? This exhibition is especially timely, as we debate courses of action with half-lives which make 1849 the equivalent of yesterday. Curator Frye summarizes, "The real challenge is to examine both the winners and losers, and to look inward at ourselves and think of California's future, our own cultural value systems, and our need to preserve the golden land that sustains us."[12]

Mija Riedel is a writer who lives in Oakland, California.

ing against the mining companies but it wasn't until 1884 that legal action established agriculture as the number one industry in California. Conservation efforts lagged even further behind, and for years mining waste was dumped in waterways not directly affecting farming. California salmon – which had once grown to 5 feet in length – approached extinction. Layers of mercury settled in river beds and the floor of San Francisco Bay, where they remain still.



Miner's Tools, c. 1850
Collection Norm Wilson, Photograph by Joe Samberg

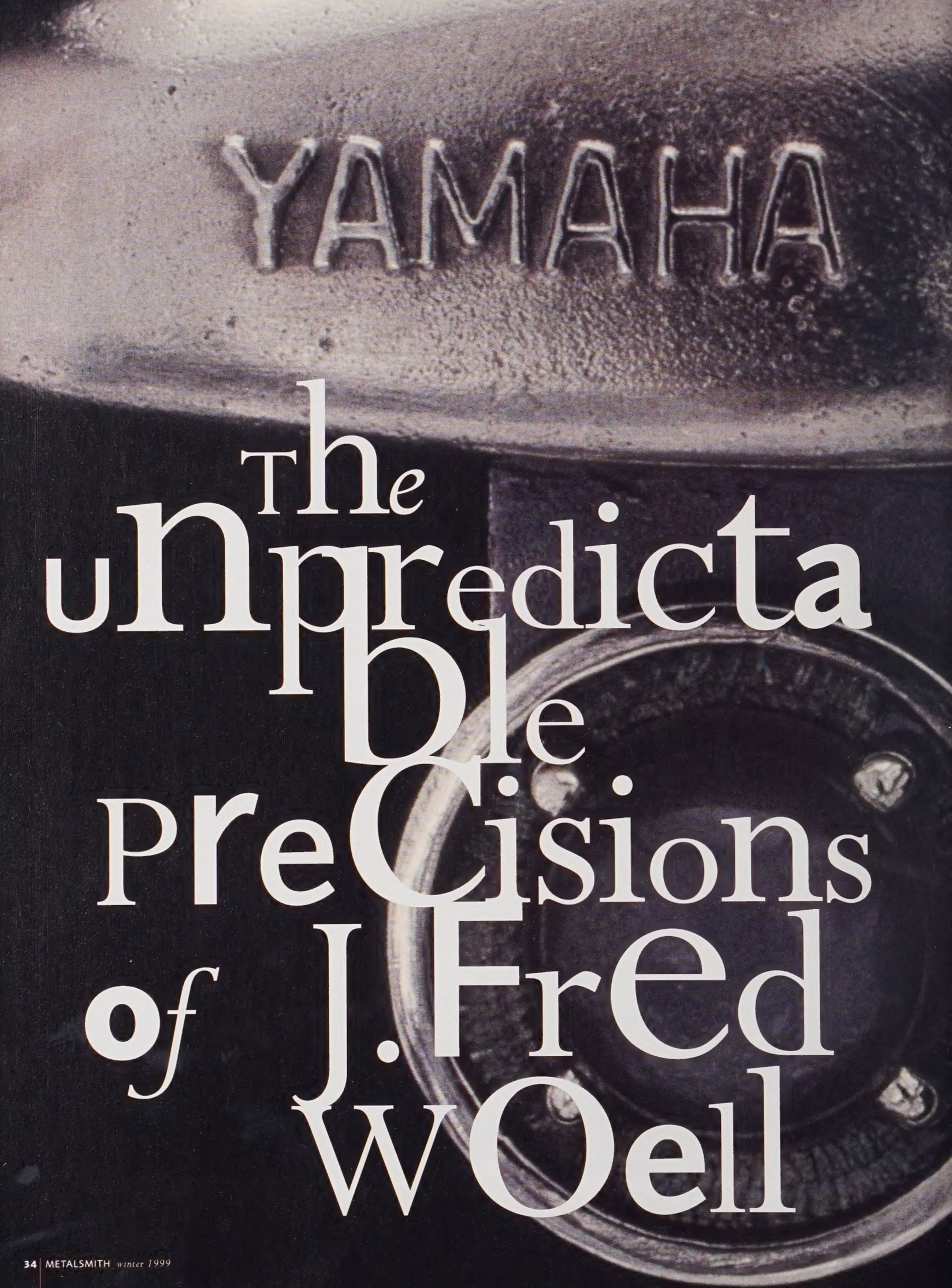
The lure of gold had made California the "most culturally and racially diverse society the world had ever known,"[9] but the tolerance and treatment of foreign miners declined with the diminishing supplies of easily attainable gold. Chinese and Mexican miners were heavily taxed and subject to physical violence. Native Californians suffered one assault after another, culminating in a federally funded campaign designed to eradicate them completely. In 1866, a Chico newspaper was not alone in endorsing such action: "It has become a question of extermination now . . . . There is only one kind of treaty that is effective . . . cold lead."[10]

In all, 4000 tons of gold were taken out of California. *Gold Fever!* addresses "effects of the Gold Rush that have never been covered in a major exhibition: the impact on the natural environment and on native peoples; the nearly instantaneous creation of an industrial and commercial base for California; the rapid growth of a multicultural society."[11] It is, indeed, a refreshingly broad, in-depth, reflective view of 1848 and the years that followed. Gold emerges as symbol – revealing much about our choices, values, and short and long term vision.

[1] L. Thomas Frye, *GOLD FEVER! The Lure and Legacy of the California Gold Rush*, Oakland Museum of California, 1998.
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Gold Fever*, Web Site, www.museumca.org/goldrush.html
[4] Frye, *GOLD FEVER*.
[5] Museum Installation Text.
[6] Frye, *GOLD FEVER*.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] *Gold Fever*, Web Site, www.museumca.org/goldrush.html
[11] Frye, *GOLD FEVER*.
[12] Ibid.

Two related exhibitions – *Silver and Gold: Cased Images of the California Gold Rush* and *Art of the Gold Rush* – are traveling, as are smaller portions of *Gold Fever!*. See the following schedule or contact the museum at 1-510 238-2200. Check the web site (www.museumca.org/goldrush.html) for an admirably thorough summation of *Gold Fever!*.

right
Attributed to James B. Starkweather *Miners at Spanish Flat*, 1852
quarter-plate daguerreotype
Collection of the California State Library



The unpredictable precisions of J. Fred Woell

text by Donna Gold

It Was not always easy for J. Fred WOell to let chance be his guide. There was a time when he planned out every piece he made. If it went awry, he would, by his own admission, "go berserk."

Ask Woell now for specifics on how he creates his collaged jewelry sculptures, and he'll spend a lot of time telling you not how he does it, but why.

Woell is legendary in the metalsmithing world, known for what some call his "anti-jewelry" and what others call "junk jewelry" – mostly pins composed of rather earnest symbols of American life juxtaposed with toys and other throwaways. Comprised of plastic toy soldiers, miniature babies (the kind sold in bins for a few pennies), and spoons sporting Colonel Sanders's pop-eyed head, Woell's pins, pendants, and small sculptures seem to be both wistful celebrations of the American century and an ironic ode to the junk culture it spawned.

background
Adrift (detail), 1992
silver, moonstone
$1\frac{1}{8} \times 1\frac{5}{8} \times \frac{1}{2}$"

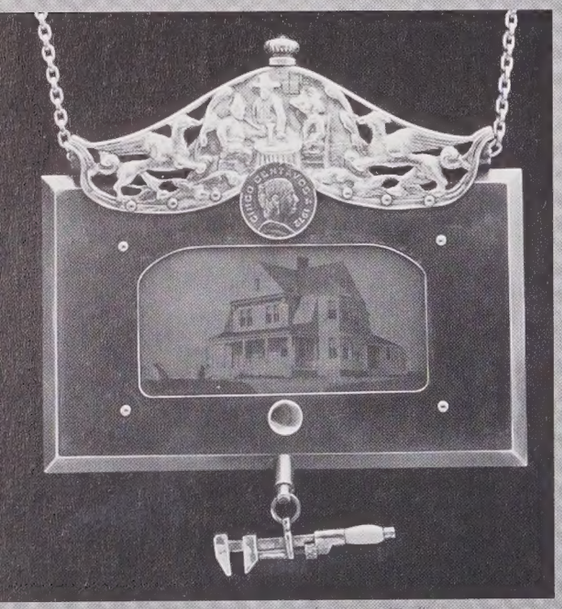
right
Fly By Knight, 1996
925 silver, brass
$2\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{3}{8}$"

Some of his pieces, like the small sculpture that balances three miniature baby dolls off of the head of a toy soldier, much as if the soldier were a fountain spewing babies, offer complexities and connections that are quite profound. Yet most of what Woell does is left to chance. "I don't plan the whole piece out in advance," says Woell, speaking from the art-filled house he shares with artist Pat Wheeler. "I have an idea, I start someplace, and I see what happens, how things evolve." Working from years' worth of collected and donated toys and other objects, which he cuts up or adds whole to his pieces, he says, "they tell their own story, I'm just the person who helps them."

This pursuit of chance is a part post-sixties Zen approach flavored by a John Cage notion of randomness and part plain sense. When working with plastic, which stretches, melts and even burns according to its own logic, Woell simply cannot take control.

A busy schedule that has most always included day jobs (he's taught at the New Paltz campus of the State University of New York, Haystack Mountain School of Design, Swain School of Design, and Boston University, among other places) as well as studio work, has helped turn Cage's arbitrary time frames into a practical approach to creation. Sometimes Woell only has the weekend to work in his studio, so he will accept that as a limit. And no matter what, the work will be finished in the weekend. Such limitations direct his choices of how he plies his craft.

"How chance works in that regard is that with the breath of experience I have as a metalsmith, I can spend a lot of time fabricating elements, or I can glue or wire them together. I use a quicker way because I only have so much time, but I'm not sloppy."



Woell, a lanky Midwesterner with a shy, crooked smile, comes by his belief in chance almost instinctively. Since his father was an insurance adjuster for fire claims, his family's livelihood was based on chance. Woell's sense of irony may stem from the fact that though his father dealt in ephemeral losses, he was a man who loved working with his hands. It was through his father that Woell learned to love and understand tools.

The Woells were frequently uprooted – chance and irony again. Woell kept up that peripatetic life through and after college, switching schools, switching subjects, coming upon teachers and ultimately his own life's choices also by chance. He took an economics degree from the University of Illinois because an art teacher dared to suggest he'd be a good teacher. "I wanted to be an artist, not a teacher," Woell recalls. "So I quit art. When you grow up in a family that doesn't know anything about art, you have such romantic ideas."

While economics was not close to his heart ("I hated it," he grimaces. "But my parents came through the Depression and they were incredibly practical."), his minor in political science meant a lot. One political science professor was so inspiring that Woell got the idea that he, too, could teach. So after a stint in the army, the man who quit art because someone suggested he would be a good art teacher returned to school to take a B.F.A. in art education. It was then that he discovered metallurgy under Robert von Neumann.

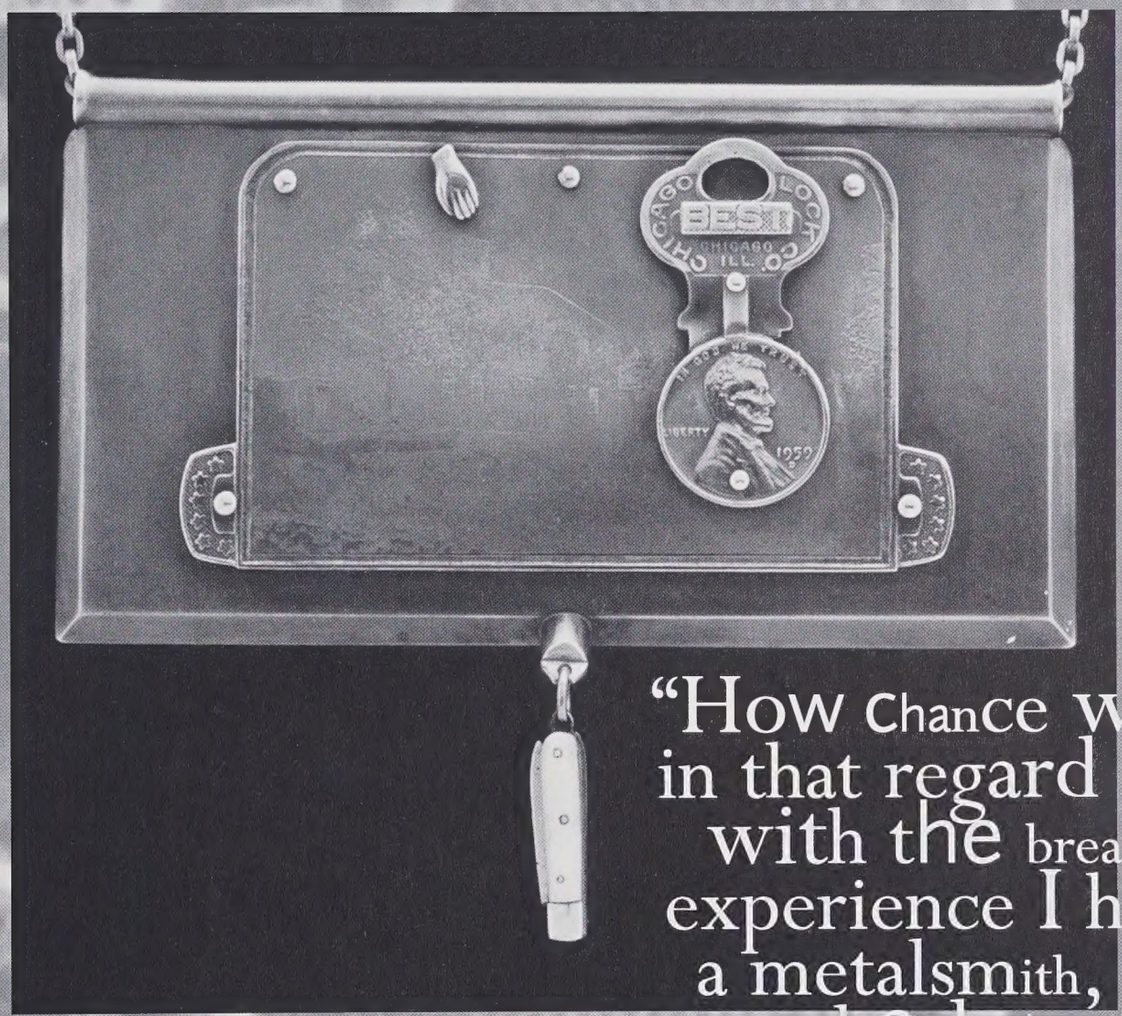
Because of von Neumann, Woell decided to go to graduate school, and he enrolled in the M.F.A. program in metals and sculpture at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. But because he liked the metals teacher more, he finished with an M.F.A. in metalsmithing and jewelry.

"Then I got a job teaching. I was Mr. Art for a little town." He taught thirty-three classes a week, twenty-two of them different. On Fridays, he journeyed among seven one-room country

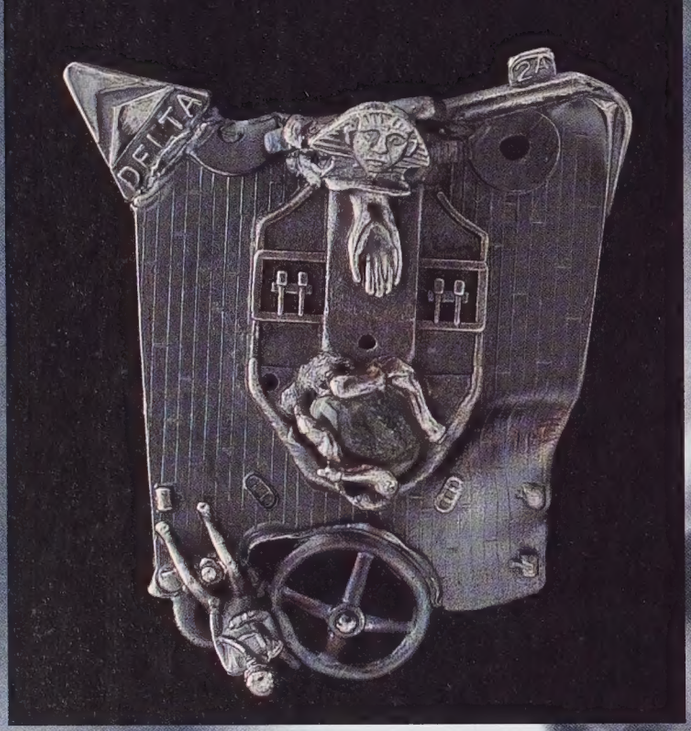
opposite page
There's No Place Like Home!, 1996
wall plug plate, copper photo etched plate,toy wrench, top of coin purse, coin, copper, silver, brass
$4^{3}/_{4} \times 4^{1}/_{2} \times {}^{5}/_{16}$"

below
Prairie Home Companion, 1996
photo etched plate, key, Lincoln penny, plug cover plate, miniature pearl handle pocket knife, copper, brass, silver, steel
$3^{1}/_{2} \times 4^{1}/_{2} \times {}^{1}/_{4}$"

background
Prairie Home Companion, 1996 (detail)



"How chance works in that regard is that with the breath of experience I have as a metalsmith, I can spend a lot of time fabricating elements, or I can glue or wire them together. I use a quicker way because I only have so much time, but I'm not sloppy."

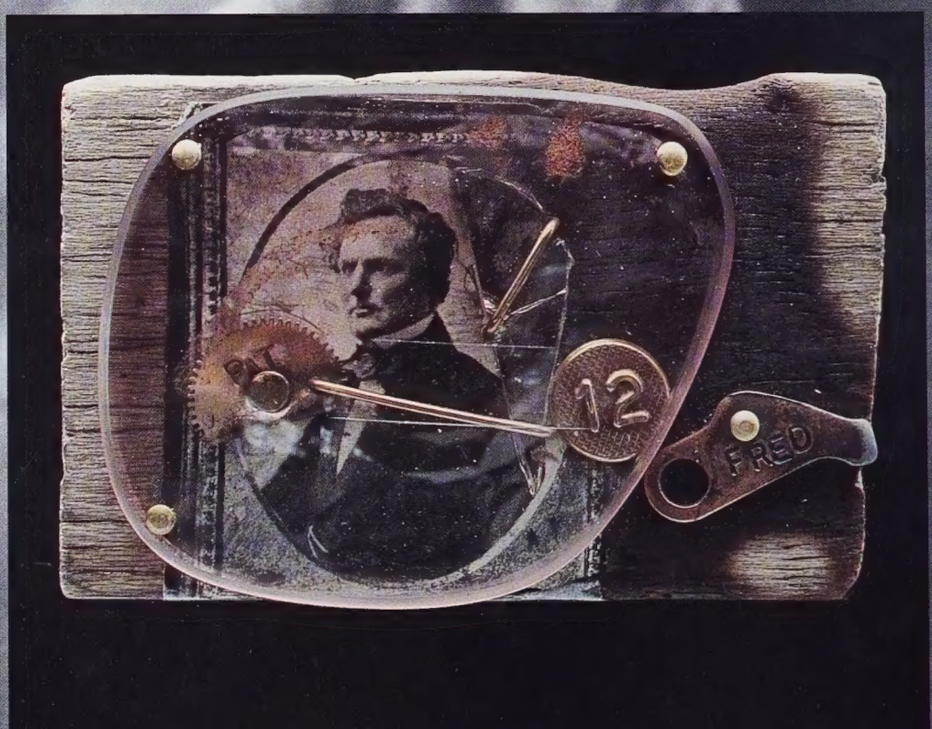


top
Grand Expectations 1992
cast silver, synthetic stone
$1^{3}/_{4} \times 2 \times 1/_{2}$"

above
Art & Craft & Scallop Shells 1992
cast silver, stone
$2^{3}/_{4} \times 3^{1}/_{4} \times 1/_{2}$"

right
Pat and Fred/12 Oct. 1992, 1992
mixed media
$1^{7}/_{8} \times 3 \times 1/_{2}$"

background
J. Fred Woell in his studio at Cranbrook, 1967



schoolhouses, spending half an hour in each schoolhouse. "I built a whole art program in two years." At the time, his salary of $6,000 felt like a fortune, so he saved money, paid for his car, and quit.

For several more years, Woell stayed in the Midwest, working for a time with Frank Gallo, where he learned the technique of casting epoxy resin, and spending some of his happiest months living in a lakeside shack. Then he returned to school once again, this time to study sculpture at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan.

His signature plastic castings began when he and his first wife Katharine Woell rented an apartment in Wisconsin. The couple walked in to find that the family that lived there before had left a pile of broken toys. This was in the 1960s, just as the Scandinavian-style silver jewelry of Georg Jenson had become the rage. At that time when he showed his jewelry around, he was told, "'If you want to sell, you'll have to work in gold.'" Stubbornness prevailed; Woell started making jewelry out of junk – or rather found objects, like the toys strewn throughout his apartment. He's been searching out old, broken, and remaindered toys ever since.

He relishes unpredictability. "At the point where you're trying to fuse two plastic pieces it's too hot to touch, and if you're trying to come out with something, it becomes obviously different. There's a lot of surprises." But even before he had started working with plastics, Woell had learned a lesson in acceptance. This was at a time when he was working with glazed ceramics. While his colleagues controlled the way the glazes reacted in the kiln, Woell did not. He found he relished the changes. "Then," he says, "I heard a story about Hamada, the Japanese potter." At a lecture, someone had asked the master why he built a larger kiln. His answer: He had gotten to a point where he could control the smaller one.

"Here's a man with great wisdom and incredible pots who had realized that controlling everything in terms of pots is not the best thing. I think that's kind of a Zen thing. Anyhow, I've always admired that kind of philosophy. Before, if the piece didn't come out a lot like the drawing, I'd go berserk. Now, I say, 'Thank you,' let's see where this is going to lead to."

But it's important to remember that Woell leapt into chance from a thorough background in craft. He's quite proud, for instance, that after casting the two halves of a plastic camera lens cap case, despite the alterations of heat and metal, the cast bronze easily twists open; what is sculpture becomes magic container. Recently, Woell has become an expert at precious metal clay. (His ability to tinker, fix, and create has also worked wonders at nearby Haystack, where Woell has run the maintenance department for nine years.)

Woell says he was originally inspired to cast plastics by fellow metalsmith Ed Higgens. "I don't know what happened to him, but he discovered you could burn up plastics, and so use the lost wax process with plastic." Woell was teaching by then, and he found his students eager to cast anything and everything — a bug, leaf, a pine cone, anything that could burn. But was that enough? To his students, he would say, "Yes, you can cast it, but what are you going to do with it? The idea is to make it unique, something that expresses thinking, not replicating."

There's nothing unique about a Pepsi cap, or a KFC spoon — but put a few things together and you get a point, a perspective, a statement.

There's nothing unique about a Pepsi cap, or a KFC spoon — but put a few things together and you get a point, a perspective, a statement.

For much of Woell's life, this perspective has also been autobiographical. This spring, Woell had a retrospective of twenty-five years of work at Maine's major independent non-profit gallery, Maine Coast Artists, located in Rockport. There, Woell revealed a personal history of rebellion, alienation, ironic romanticism, and perhaps most poignantly, the efforts necessary to come to grips with a failed marriage.

A miniature sculpture called *Stop the War I want to get Married*, features a bride and groom emerging from a toy soldier's gun. At the other end of Woell's romantic spectrum stands *Requiem to a Lukewarm Lover*. It is an elegant music box made of polished wood and featuring a small cast of a runaway plastic groom

standing on a wedding cake-like pedestal. To wind up the music box, there's another cast, this time of a traditional but miniature wedding cake's bride and groom. As the music plays, the solo groom rotates. Everything is altered. The groom has had his leg bent at the knee, as if he were running off. The bouquet is broken so it just looks like a stick. The music, too, is changed. Some of the metal prongs that create the music are removed, others are added, so that the sound is slow, sour, dissonant — much like love on the wane.

Even Woell's use of chance and his mischievous anger is autobiographical. "I am still pretty anal and Protestant in my background," he says. "My family is conservative and linear and I am, too. I'm trying to break out of it — all my life I've been. If I didn't do this, I wouldn't be any different."

As may seem natural for a man in his sixties, recently remarried (artist Wheeler also makes three-dimensional collages, though hers tend to feature textiles, focusing on the more feminine themes of raising children and sending them out into the world), who has just undergone the intense personal scrutiny of a major retrospective, his recent work seems less personally autobiographical and more wistful. Many of Woell's current references are to boyhood themes, like Boy Scouts and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Miniature model airplanes sport Colonel Sanders's heads, tiny sphinxes, and propellers made of miniature hands.

While Woell says his work addresses humanity's abuse of nature, the way we discard huge piles of junk and turn the junk makers – Colonel Sanders, again – into icons, there's another side to Woell's iconography. This side betrays a genuine, Midwestern innocence.

Woell is Tom Swift grown up, the boy adventurer whose paths lead not to creating blimps and submarines, but triumphs in miniature, still requiring careful adherence to technique, despite his admission that "art is always an accident."

The mischievousness of a grown-up Tom Sawyer is present, too. One of Woell's small sculptures incorporates a cast cigarette butt and a coin from a Denver, Colorado brothel. As the coin proclaims, it was once run by "Madam Ruth Jacobs, prop., Silver Dollar Hotel." He has dubbed this delightfully wicked sculpture, *Chalice for Saint Erectus*.

But while Woell may mock religion, he remains boyishly earnest about his villains (Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew could lead the list) and his heroes. A recent series using photo etch plates offers tributes to Midwestern farmhouses. One of them, a pendant called *Prairie Home Companion,* incorporates a miniature cast hand plus such boyish pocket items as a Lincoln penny, a key, and a miniature pocketknife. His reliquary for Franklin D. Roosevelt, using a tin can and featuring a stamp of the New Deal president within a miniature frame, is an unabashed celebration of the man who helped move the nation from collecting dimes in tin cans to a modicum of security, at least for most.

"Some march in parades," says Woell of his work, "some get involved in movements. I can say a lot about my things in my work, and when they get exhibited, they probably have some effect on others — at least, I've met people that say that — that I have had an effect. It helps to get that perspective, because from day to day, you wonder."

Understandably, as he reaches his seventh decade, Woell spends some time pondering his impact as an artist, though a self-critical questioning seems to have been around throughout his life. "I don't know how I'll measure up in the long run in terms of history of art," he says. "I'm not very worried about it. I've had more success than I ever expected to have, so I feel very fortunate."

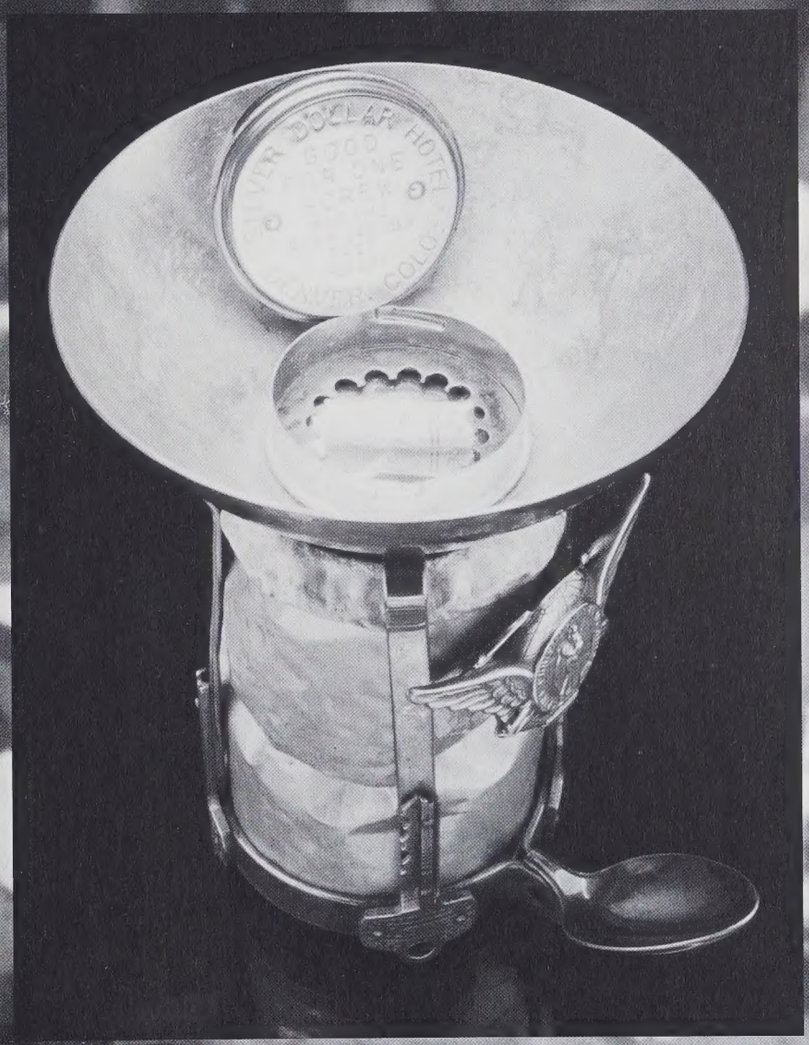
Besides, he adds, a show like the one at Maine Coast Artists is a reward. After all the struggle and worry of making work and making a living, such a show, says Woell, "is one little moment that has ripples of delight. Once you get your life spread out in front of you, in terms of creative work, all kinds of things happen in your mind. I don't need any other reinforcement to make it worthwhile. Sometimes I even wonder if I did the work – it's that exciting."

Hanging beside his jewelry bench, just to one side of his home's central kitchen, unattached to any piece of jewelry, is a medallion he received when he was a Boy Scout. Reaching back to the source of his work, beyond statements that speak of the nourishing nature of art, how it heals and reveals, he muses, "There's one thing that figures in all of this," says Woell. "It's that I was a Boy Scout and I've always had a great respect for the environment." And you can just imagine the metalsmith picking up garbage, cleaning up the roadside like a good scout.

But don't take anything at face value. Behind pieces that have been shown in London, The Netherlands, Germany, and Romania and reside in permanent collections in New York City's American Crafts Museum, Washington D.C.'s Renwick Gallery, and the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts, among many other places, stands a stubbornly earnest Midwesterner playing with tools, using art to heal, yes, and art to understand, yes, but above all, art to express a wickedly mischievous sense of humor.

Donna Gold of Stockton Springs, Maine, frequently writes about art and artists.

"There's one thing that figures in all of this," says Woell. "It's that I was a Boy Scout and I've always had a great respect for the environment." And you can just imagine the metalsmith picking up garbage, cleaning up the roadside like a good scout.



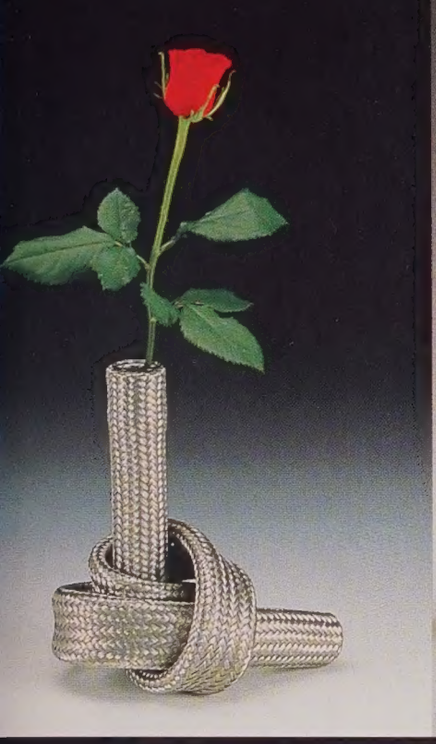
inset above
Chalice for St. Erectus, 1986
nickel, aluminum, copper, glass, brass

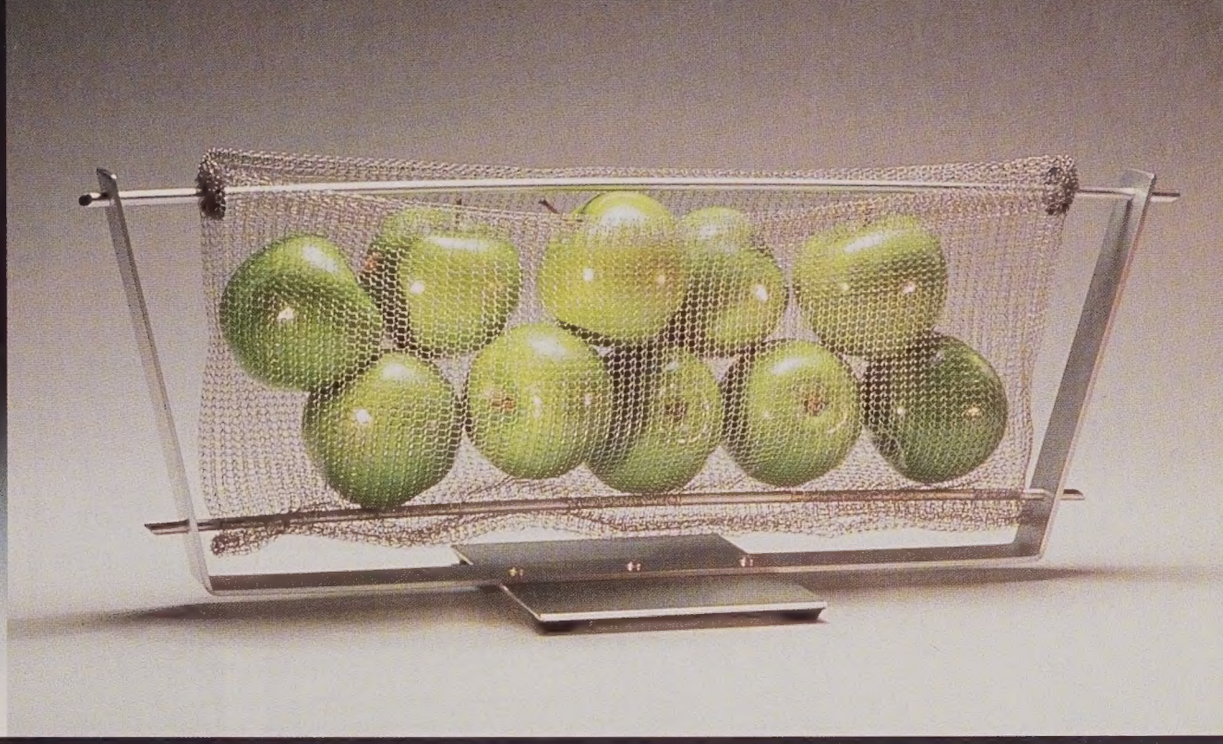
background
J. Fred Woell in his studio at Deer Isle, Maine, 1995

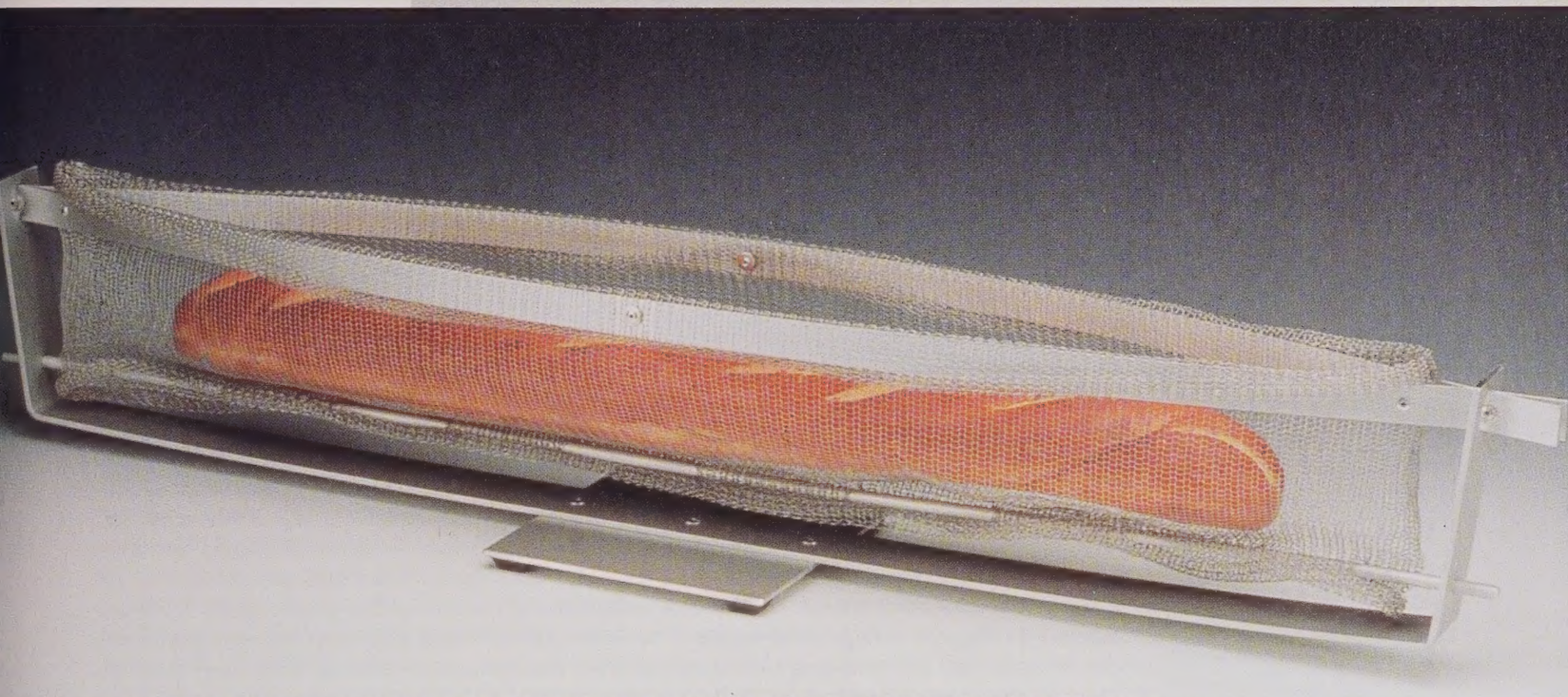
W. Chester Old

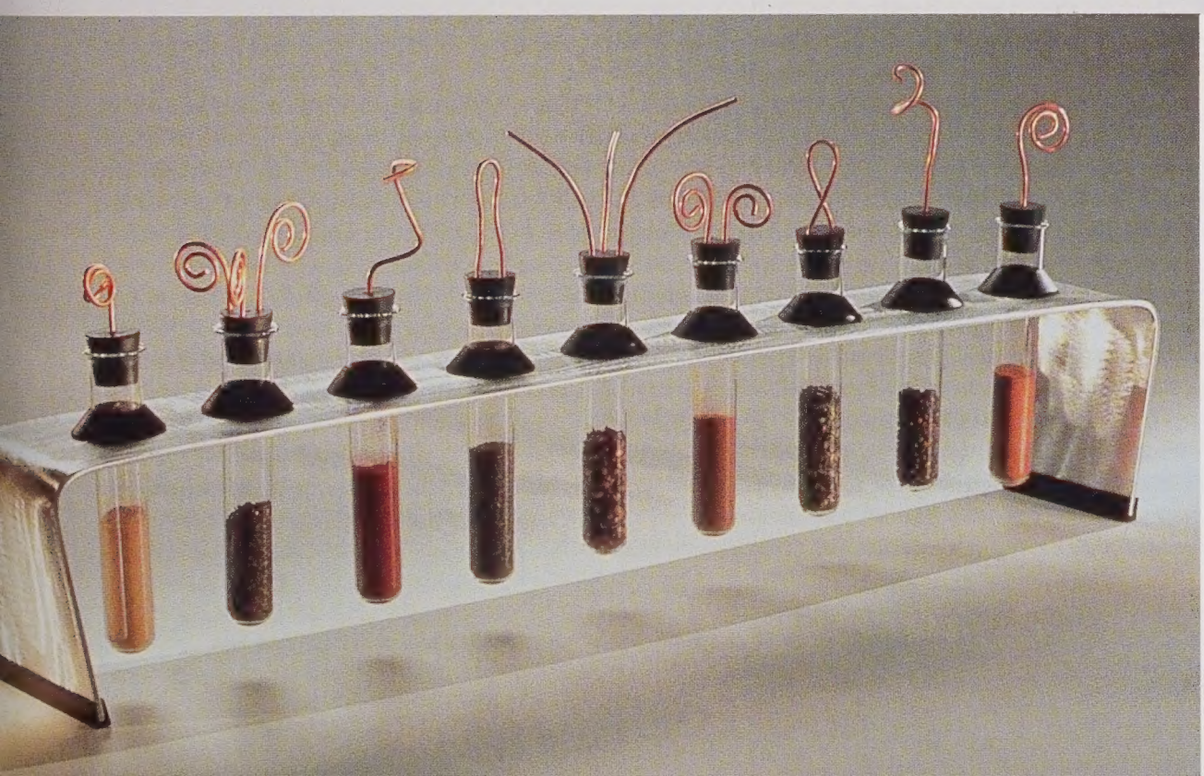
Since the beginnings of industrialization, craftspersons have often found themselves at odds with many modern materials and technologies. Some have sought to recuperate past techniques and materials, rejecting the modern as soulless and impersonal. This, however, is not the case with W. Chester Old.

While exercising the same meticulous execution of handwork that is a historical birthright of the crafts, Old embraces the variety of new materials which technology has made available. The soft sheen of aluminum, the highly reflective hardness of stainless steel, and the undulating texture of machine woven wire and screen are all celebrated and fashioned into functional objects for the contemporary home. Though at times somewhat whimsical, W. Chester Old's pieces eschew the often irritatingly self-conscious archness that plagues much contemporary crafts which incorporate industrial materials and forms. It is as easy to imagine one of his bread boats or baskets resting on a Stickley table as on a contemporary Corian countertop. His designs delight us in their modernity while always respecting the traditional legacy of fine craft.









top left
Knot (bud vase)
woven metal, glass tube
7 x 5 x 8"

top right
Karen (basket)
stainless steel mesh, anodized aluminum
23 x 6 x 9"

above
Bread Boat
anodized aluminum, stainless steel mesh
34 x 7 x 6"

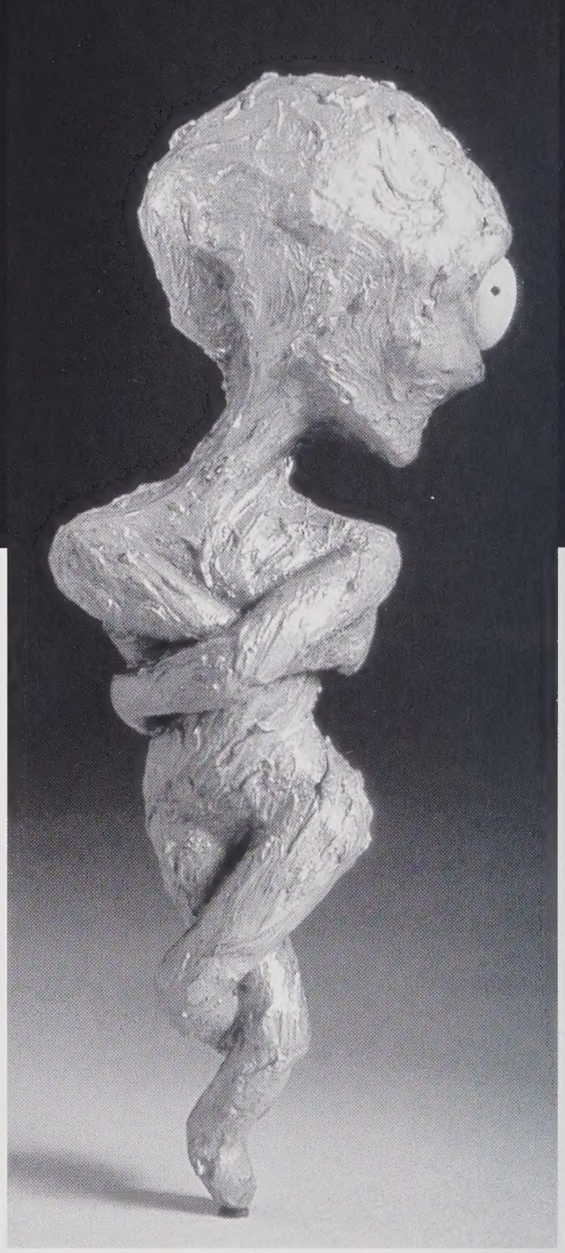
left
Spice of Life (spice rack)
brushed aluminum, copper, rubber
27 x 4 x 11"

Bruce Metcalf: Encyclopedia of Anxieties

Perimeter Gallery
Chicago, Illinois

text by Lisa Costello

review



If I look into someone's eye and think of the fact that the eye is nothing but a rotating sack of fluid, then an eye becomes an unsettling thing: I see the eye, but it does not see me. What sees is the mind, the person connected to the eye but he eye itself is just tissue...

James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back*

Bruce Metcalf's body of work *Encyclopedia of Anxieties* may be likened to a Victorian cabinet full of oddities. Consisting of over twenty figurative brooches and four wall pieces, this body of work is less graphic and more convincing as three-dimensional figures than his previous output. The brooches are intended to be a study and collection of the portrayal of human nature struggling with the self due to a lack of emotional well being within society. Metcalf feels that the importance of the work lies in the wearability of the work enabling it to "cross boundaries" between the art world and the non-art world

right
Figure Pin #151, 1997
paint, copper electroform
$4^{3}/_{4} \times 1^{3}/_{4}$"

Metcalf's work is satirical, grotesque, humorous, and disturbing. In an ironic twist on the three monkeys of evil (four in Metcalf's case), they imply the inability to hear, speak, see, or do anything about the upcoming future. Whether bound, disfigured, or metamorphosized Metcalf's figures symbolically address the anxieties of social decay. Like the unsettling discovery that the eye is only tissue, Metcalf uses alterations of the human figure combined with a denial of the senses to convey issues of inner turmoil. The distortion of the figures and use of cartoon like imagery is strikingly similar to some of the German Expressionists and Dadaists of the early to mid twentieth century. Artists such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Hannah Hoch, and George Grosz used the human figure to convey complex issues dealing with the political and social constructs of the times. Employing the figure, these artists, as well as Metcalf, rely on an involuntary sharing of sensation between our physical being and something that we see – in other words, empathy.

In an artist's statement, dated February 1997, Metcalf referred to himself as both a craftsperson and a narrative-symbolist artist. He suggested that the strength of his work lies where the "art world" has faltered. Unlike the art world, his goal is to make his work accessible to the "populist view," through stylized imagery and the wearability of the work. "Normally, we think of art as occupying a special space: a gallery, a museum, a showcase house of a wealthy person," Metcalf states. Why then, is his work being sold in a high-end fine craft gallery? He feels the main function of his pieces lies within the interaction of random onlookers who come into contact with the wearer while the brooch is being worn. While conceptually a strong and effectual solution, does this body of work, individually or collectively, help him achieve his goal of accessibility between the art world and the vernacular? In Metcalf's work the importance of the objects should be the impact the brooch may have on people because it speaks to them, it evokes empathy in them, or they identify with the artist. For all of its qualities – its wearability, the idea of its wearability, its intimacy, a desire to invoke a response – its main value is not its public appearance, but its intrinsic value to the owner.

Metcalf's work provides a contemporary look into human nature, but he seems to be overly familiar with his figurative subject matter and technical virtuosity. While he has set forth some very high but attainable goals for his work perhaps he has slipped into the comfort of his easily recognizable style, or is too self conscious to risk a shift in his work. Whatever the case, it will be interesting to see what the future holds for the work of Bruce Metcalf.

Lisa Costello is a writer who lives in Chicago, Illinois.

Introducing Contemporary British Jewelry

Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston
March 7 – April 26, 1998

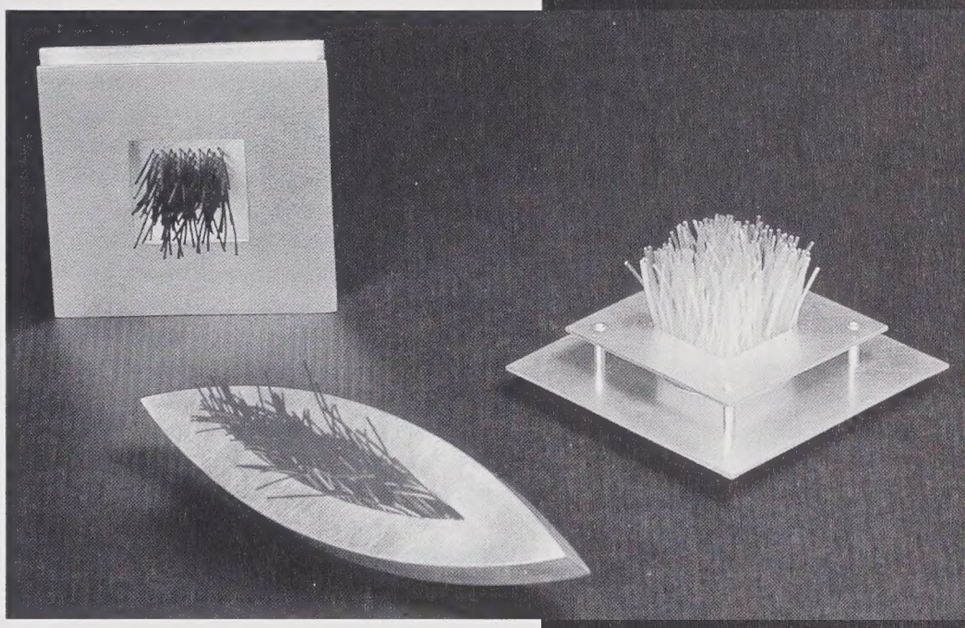
text by Patricia Harris and David Lyon

Curator Gail M. Brown has provided a genuine service to the American metals community by assembling this eclectic exhibition of contemporary British jewelry with the assistance of Clare Beck of the Crafts Council of England and Wales. And Boston's Society of Arts and Crafts, long the American port of entry for British design aesthetics, makes a historically apt venue. By necessity, this exhibition is more a sampling rather than an exhaustive survey, but it represents many of the themes and styles of the current British scene through the work of thirty artists who range from well-established figures to mid-career artists to a handful of emerging art jewelers.

If there is a dialectic that emerges from this juxtaposition of jewelers with diverse styles, it is between adornment and expression – jewelry as an object to admire in its own right and jewelry as a carrier for message. For example, the regal necklaces of textured gold and precious stones from Gerda Flöckinger are literally fit for a queen. They speak of great wealth and power – adornment symbolic of exalted status.

Similarly, an excellent selection of monumental necklaces and stacked rings from Wendy Ramshaw establishes a point of departure for looking at the work of other British jewelers. Ramshaw is prolific and well-distributed in the U.S., making her perhaps the most familiar of the British art jewelers here, but she continues to innovate within her design parameters. Nor is she immune to a gentle self-parody, mimicking her own familiar cabochon settings by fashioning the stones as well as the settings in metal.

Ramshaw's work has always had an architectural element to it – echoes of medieval crenellated buildings, and the sculptural flourishes of cornice details. The rings and brooches of Vicki Ambery-Smith carry that architectural impulse to its obvious conclusion as she fashions delicate, often detailed facades of recognizable structures in a palette of contrasting metals. Rather than slavishly reproduce details of specific buildings, Ambery-Smith strikes a pleasing balance between verisimilitude and sculptural grace as a wearable object. By their nature, these pieces have the air of narration about them – almost as captured evocations of place.



This urge to reflect and represent reaches its apotheosis through the literal metal sculptures of Carol Mather, whose luscious enamel work rescues the whimsy of her subjects (the Brits do love their dogs . . .) from the realm of kitsch. By way of contrast, Paul Preston's work – mostly brooches depicting naturalistic scenes – calls attention to its mix of different golds and alloys as a form of abstraction. Preston wavers between painterly depiction and storytelling. Perhaps the most intriguing of his pieces at SAC were those of humorous vignettes from the adventures of "Red Mole," a playful cartoon-like figure that inhabits many of Preston's land- and waterscapes.

Susan Cross's work stems from an entirely different tradition of adornment, drawing her inspirations from the complexities of textiles to develop chain and wire jewelry where warp and weft become abstracted and, in some cases, obscured by the accretion of stitches and other surface layering. In smaller forms, such as earrings, she creates metal textiles so fluid that they ripple as the wearer moves. If there is a historical antecedent, it is medieval chain mail.

top l to r
Maria Hanson
Pink Form 1 Brooch, 1995
silver, dyed nylon fibers
3 9/16 x 1 3/8 x 1/2"

Yellow Form 1 Brooch, 1995
silver, dyed nylon fibers
2 3/8 x 2 3/8 x 1 3/16"

Green Form Brooch, 1995
silver, dyed nylon fibers
2 x 2 x 1/2"

Motion seems to be a common thread linking the jewelry of a number of these artists. Seemingly vastly impractical, Maria Hanson's *Containment for Contemplation* rings feature sensuously precious decorated silver balls perched on long, springy rods extending from simple rings. The wearer makes a bargain when she puts them on. These rings restrict hand movement and call constant attention to themselves as objects for contemplation. Hanson's jewelry cries out for tactile and physical engagement. Her silver brooches incorporating tufts of dyed nylon fibers inject color into her work and provoke an overwhelming urge to touch. Works with such kinetic and tactile elements manage to bridge the dialectic – they stand as pure objects and call for the kind of intellectual interaction implied by narrative.

A similar multi-sensory effect is evident in the work of Dorothy Hogg. She weds an ironic formal austerity to a predilection for rhythm and sound. Many of her pieces feature free-moving metal elements that strike one another in a steady movement as they are worn – again playing the formal visual elements against other senses. In a similar vein, Anna Gordon's constructions are designed to move continuously but without contact between the elements, creating a silent visual flutter.

Grainne Morton's *Tiny Treasures* series carries flutter to an extreme. These brooches (some wearable, some not) consist of arrays of small metal boxes in which she suspends miniature objects as if they were teacups on a cup rack. Many of the objects are found pieces, a practice that poses a danger of becoming too precious, too nostalgic. But Morton has the good sense to mix it up – juxtaposing made objects with found ones, abstract with concrete. And her jaunty sense of design seems to work perfectly to inject a frisky whimsy into what could be simply mechanical packaging.

Morton's hypothesized nostalgia finds a kindred spirit in some of the new pieces by Jane Adam, who has been working in anodized aluminum for nearly two decades. Her pieces in the SAC exhibit show a new simplicity in her approach. The surfaces of her simple forms – both geometric rectangles and biomorphic ovoids – are reticulated to produce textural qualities, then very simply dyed. The resulting pieces embody a classically simple elegance not usually associated with aluminum – an elegance that is, perhaps, British to the core.

Cambridge, Massachusetts-based writers **Patricia Harris** and **David Lyon** are authors of the forthcoming *Art of the State: Massachusetts* (Abrams: New York, 1999).

Moving Metal - An Exhibition of Contemporary Metalsmiths

Bruce Gallery of Art
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania
September 2 – 26, 1997

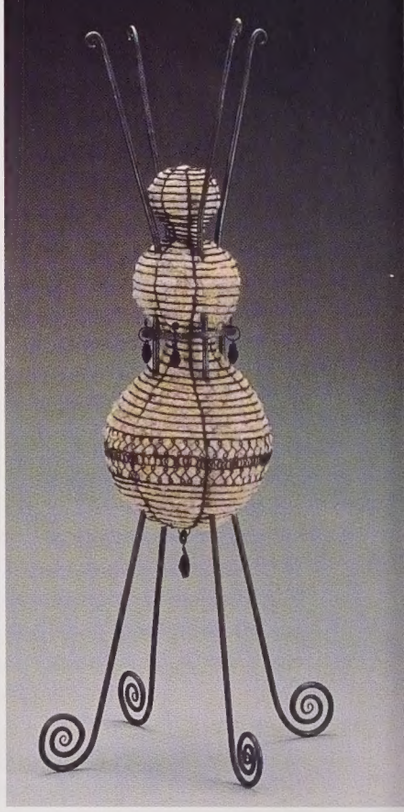
text by Kathleen Browne

review

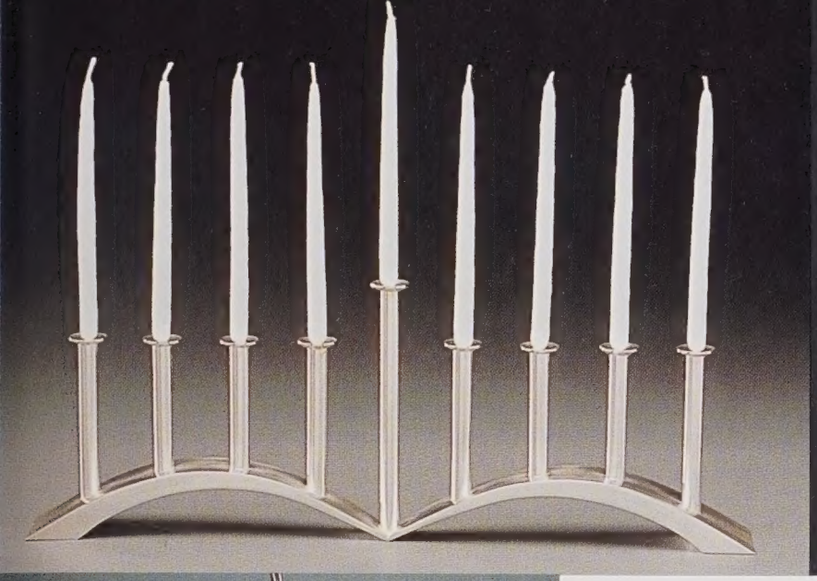
Sue Amendolara, curator of *Moving Metal - An Exhibition of Contemporary Metalsmiths*, selected works that represent such diverse categories as body adornment, functional hollowware, sculpture, objects, and conceptual work. This is a common strategy employed by educators/curators at college and university galleries located in more remote areas. The desire is to make available for viewing a diversity of works for students to examine. The downside of this approach is that the works are so different from each other in intention and form that they defy comparison – something like trying to compare apples to moon rocks. Fortunately, each artist exhibited a sizable body of work, three to six pieces per artist showing larger works and four to sixteen pieces per artist showing jewelry and smaller works.

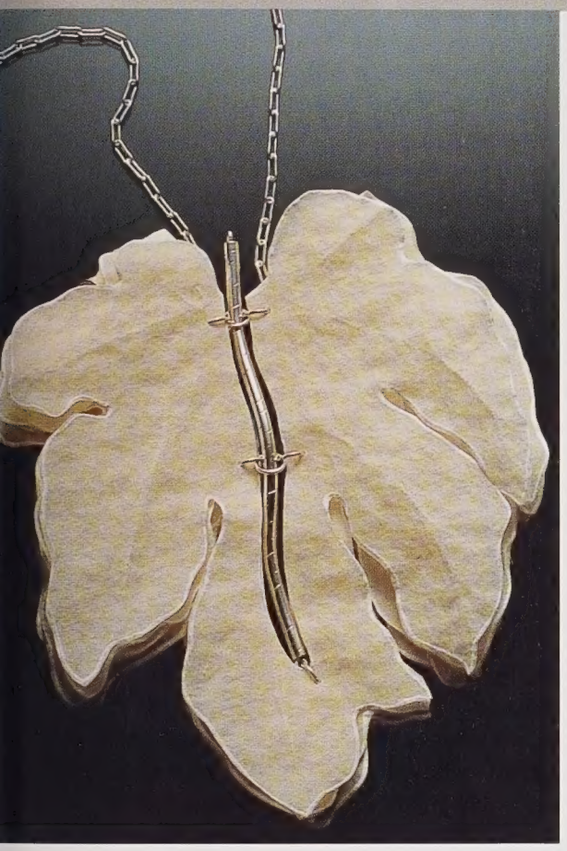
Some of the most engaging work in the show uses little if any metal at all, such as the primarily conceptual works of Ben Cunningham and the mixed media works of Chris Ramsay. Ben Cunningham's piece, *A Year of the Blues*, consists of twelve individually framed calendar pages labeled with the month and year. Each page is inked out with a blue ball point pen, creating a solid blue field. The subtle changes in the inking reveal the progress of a depression that by the end of the year is all consuming. The stretching and strain of the paper under the force of the pen causes it to buckle and pucker, creating a relief. The viewer bears witness to the obsessive behavior that has created a record of hopelessness.

Chris Ramsay's three mixed media sculptures exemplify his unapologetically romantic view of the natural environment, a bold position to maintain today. Still, the two most engaging aspects of this work sometimes, inadvertently, overshadow Ramsay's intent, which is to examine issues concerning environmental degradation. First, Ramsay provides a guileless and optimistic lens through which to view the environment (and culture). Like poet Walt Whitman, he celebrates the commonplace. In the piece *Imper man ence* discarded bits of junk, rocks, and shells are set like precious stones over the surface of an old globe. Secondly, the works are indulgent, but not self-indulgent. The surfaces, the arrangement of found objects, the paint, and the patinas are luscious and seductive; they indulge us in absolute visual pleasure. However, it was frustrating that typical gallery regulations prohibited the viewer from looking though a spy hole into the globe to see an illuminated interior image. The image is shown next to the piece but it loses its impact. This is a common difficulty with interactive pieces shown in a gallery setting.



Harriete Estel Berman presented sculptures from the series *A Pedestal For a Woman to Stand On* as well as one piece in the form of a scale titled *Witnessing the Weight of Words*. One of the strengths of Berman's work is that it relies on the use of memory without being nostalgic. My grandmother was a quilt maker. The swatches of fabric cut from family garments that composed her quilts served as mnemonic devices that helped her retrieve memories of people, and events from her life. Berman's work function in much the same way for me and I imagine other women of the baby boom generation. We absorbed the images from the tin doll houses we played with – the bland and tidy shrubs, wallpaper patterns, furniture, cookware – to help form our idea of what our future might hold. The power of this work is that the images both repulse and comfort simultaneously. In the work *We Are Reflected in the Objects We Choose to Surround Ourselves* Berman has created a cube whose surface is composed of a baby block quilt pattern. Reflective tin mirrors form the central block of each patch, with the other pieces of the patch made from images coyly matched and coordinated from doll house interior design details. This piece interrogates a woman's role as *presentation* expert for the family, one of many roles learned in childhood.





Along with the boom in production of hollowware has come a renewed interest in liturgical objects and Judaica. Alix Mikesell's work falls into the later category. Although it breaks no new ground and fits snugly into Scandinavian modernist traditions, the *Arched Menorah* is classically functional and elegant. The two works, *Watchful Mezuzah* and *Meander Mezuzah* have been stripped of the their traditional form and decoration and as a result look like two modernist brooches. There is nothing to indicate their religious function. The untitled goblet made of sterling silver and wood has several problems. The piece is generally clunky; the silver cup is overwhelmed in scale by the thick, carved wooden stem. Also, the lip of the cup is uncomfortably thin.

The juxtaposition of widely disparate materials is at the center of the works by Jocelyn Chateauvert, Pat Flynn and Christine Clark. Chateauvert combines paper and silver in a manner that speaks to our innate attraction to opposites – hard and soft, ephemeral and permanent, fragile and durable. As no dates were included in the labeling in the exhibition, I am only guessing that Chateauvert's piece *Rattle* was one of the first experiments to combine these distinctly different materials. The head of the rattle is in the shape of a sunflower. The petals are made of paper and the silver handle is hollow with cutout symbols that seem to create a secret language. Chateauvert has certainly worked out these problems in the two exquisite pieces: *Volume II* and *Eve (clothing optional)*. The later is composed of several layers of paper in cut-out fig leaf shapes attached to a silver stem. The stem attaches to a long chain that allows the piece to hang several inches below the waist. The work is both humorous and provocative.

top left
Chris Ramsay
Imper man ence, 1996
copper, brass, bronze, globe, photo, light, lens, found objects
16 x 15 x 12"

bottom left
Christine Clark
Wool (Subservient), 1997
steel, wool
30 x 10 x 10"

top right
Alix Mikesell
Arched Menorah, 1997
Sterling
$5^{1}/_{4}$ x $12^{3}/_{4}$ x $2^{7}/_{8}$"

bottom right
Jocelyn Chateauvert
Eve (pendant)
handmade paper, sterling
5 x 6" 58" chain

Pat Flynn had six works in the exhibition combining iron with precious metals in ring, bracelet, and necklace forms, and twelve heart brooches configured into a grid. Flynn practically invented the combination of *sacred and profane* materials in jewelry production. No matter how many times I see the way he combines iron with diamonds, gold or platinum, it always satisfies. This is partially due to his restrained use of precious stones and metals and his consummate craftsmanship. The ubiquitous heart is the symbol we educators often forbid students to use. Flynn, on the other hand, continues to delight us with these emotionally charged, sometimes humorous, sometimes unabashedly sentimental works.

Christine Clark is represented by three sculptures whose forms reference the figure. The structure of these pieces fabricated from forged steel, forms a cage which is filled with raw wool. The titles of the work, *Wool (Non-Committal), Wool (Subservient)*, and *Wool (Ineffectual)*, I assume, refer to the wool itself having no particular form without the imposition of the steel structure, not unlike we humans who need institutions, laws, and belief systems to support and contain us. The decorative elements worked into the cage structures are appealing but some of the dangling decorative pieces seem superfluous, and although this is a minor point, they detract from the power and presence of these animated and engaging pieces.

David Pimentel's untitled copper vessels epitomize the title of the exhibition, *Moving Metal*. This work is evidence of extraordinary physical engagement. Not unlike the currently popular "extreme sports," this is extreme metalsmithing. Pimentel forms copper into shapes that seem impossible to all but the best smiths. As these works are essentially about technical virtuosity, I wonder how they stand up outside the metalsmithing community?

The exhibition succeeded in its attempt to show the breadth of the work being created in the field. The presentation of the work was excellent. Included in the presentation were artist drawings and inspirational material. Also in the exhibition were the works of Rebecca Reimers Cristol and Yosuke Inoue.

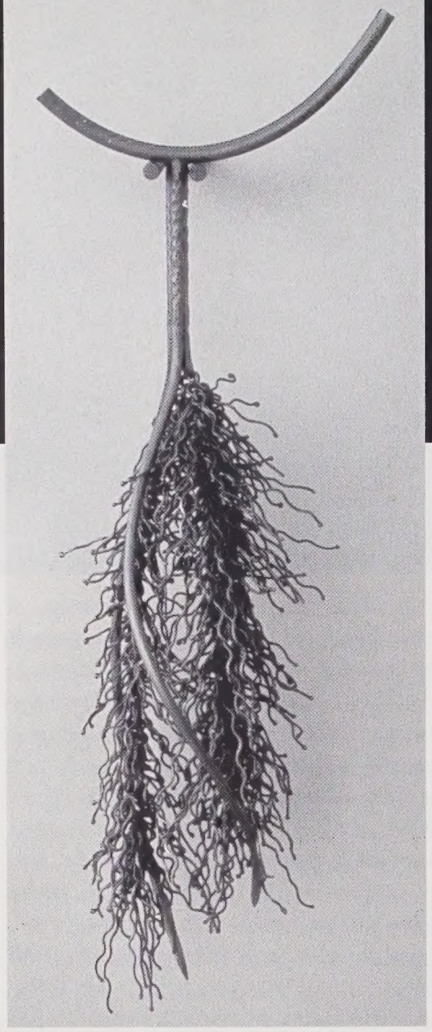
Kathleen Browne is an Associate Professor of Art at Kent State University and heads the Jewelry/Metals/Enameling Program.

Sarah Obrecht: Metals

Joanne Rapp Gallery/ The Hand and the Spirit
Scottsdale, Arizona
May 1 - 31, 1997

text by Beverly K. Brandt, Ph.D.

review



right
Handled Vine III, 1997
copper
17 1/2 x 6 x 4"

Among the many intriguing aspects of Sarah Obrecht's work is its ambiguity. Her pendants and free-standing pieces defy categorization, functioning variously as sculpture, noisemakers, wands, or flails, depending upon the viewer's perspective and interaction with them. Obrecht's May, 1997 show at the Joanne Rapp Gallery/The Hand and the Spirit was small in size, focused in scope, yet captivating. It provided opportunities both to gaze at and to handle eight recent works, each satisfying in its own right, yet also rich contributions to a thematic series.

Handling these artifacts is essential to appreciating their synesthetic appeal. Obrecht possesses a musician's sensibility, and crafts each piece to rustle distinctively when removed from bracket or pedestal and shaken. By manipulating the scale, proportion, density, and texture of her fabricated copper and polymer clay forms, Obrecht creates artifacts that are finely tuned instruments. *Empty Net* gives off a bright metallic rattle, while the dry rustle of *Fruit Net* is reminiscent of a quaking Aspen tree. The elongated *Sucker Cluster* resonates with an unrestrained looseness. Such control over the sonority of each piece is a tribute to Obrecht's trained ear, working in concert with a skilled eye and hand.

These pieces conjure up myriad associations, ranging from Victorian era kitchen implements – iron mesh pot scrubbers in particular come to mind – to bird's nests, netted basketball hoops, Medieval chain mail, and both human-made and naturalistic found objects. Those in the *Net* series feature a pouch fabricated from tiny, interlocking rings, and suspended from a hoop, supported by a multipronged handle. Those in the *Cluster* series include small, pendant pieces and larger, free-standing examples. While the handles on pieces within the *Net* series are strictly utilitarian, those of the *Cluster* series arch and extend expressively.

These handles, though subordinate to each overall piece, communicate the contrasts inherent from one series to the next. The *Net* series focuses upon opacity and enclosure, inviting the viewer to peer into a dense, secretive pouch. The pendant *Cluster* series, by contrast, evokes overripe pods that have burst open or withered away to reveal clumps of seeds, berries, or nuts at their centers. Freestanding works within the *Cluster* series provide a variation upon an exploded pod form. The largest works in the exhibition are the most dynamic and figural. *Calla Cluster* resembles a flamenco dancer: arced handles stretch upwards from a claw-like cage comprised of three rods, ending in curlicues that support the piece and form the base. The handle suggests graceful, upraised arms, while the tapered cluster of wire tendrils and mesh petals evoke a tiered and ruffled skirt.

Obrecht's skillful manipulation of color, texture, surface finish, and sound demands heightened perception on the part of the viewer/ listener. She molds botanically derived forms in hues that provide a dramatic counterpoint, or subtle complement, to the patinated wires, or rings from which they hang. Additionally, these polymer clay forms offer a soft sound that contrasts with the harsh metallic rattle of framework and fittings. *Sucker Net* combines rusty copper elements resembling the cap of an acorn with squiggly wires evoking hairpins gone awry. These "suckers'" interiors have delicate crystalline surfaces and rusty exteriors that range from tawny to greenish in coloration. As these rusty hues shift from ochre and mustard to moss and auburn, an occasional shock of acid orange brings the palette to a climax, and begs the question of how Obrecht achieves such varied finishes at such a minute scale. *Fruited Cluster* has a bold, contrasting tonality that combines warm patinated copper with cool teal blue-green polymer clay pods. These small, three-sided, pepper-like forms have crisp edges that beckon like some forbidden fruit with a lustrous sepia glint. Adding to their sensual surface textures are delicate imprints of the artist's fingertips, testimony to Obrecht's hands-on intervention in these hybrid forms' creation.

With the exception of the large, freestanding pieces in the *Cluster* series, the works are seemingly modest in appearance and might at first glance be easily overlooked in an unsympathetic setting. But the rewards they offer to the more than casual observer willing to remove them from pedestal or prong, and interact with them for a period of time, are many. Their beauty lies in their subtle look, feel, and sound, the exquisite attention to detail, and their ability to elicit multiple and varying responses on the part of the viewer/ listener. Their ambiguity characterizes them as quintessential works of the late twentieth century, yet their painstaking fabrication, and delightful visual and aural surprises are timeless in their appeal. Akin to glorious noisemakers for adults, these enigmatic rattles seem equally appropriate for banishing evil spirits from the past, blessing the quotidian pleasures of the present, or heralding the much-anticipated arrival of a new millennium.

Beverly K. Brandt is an associate professor of design at Arizona State University.

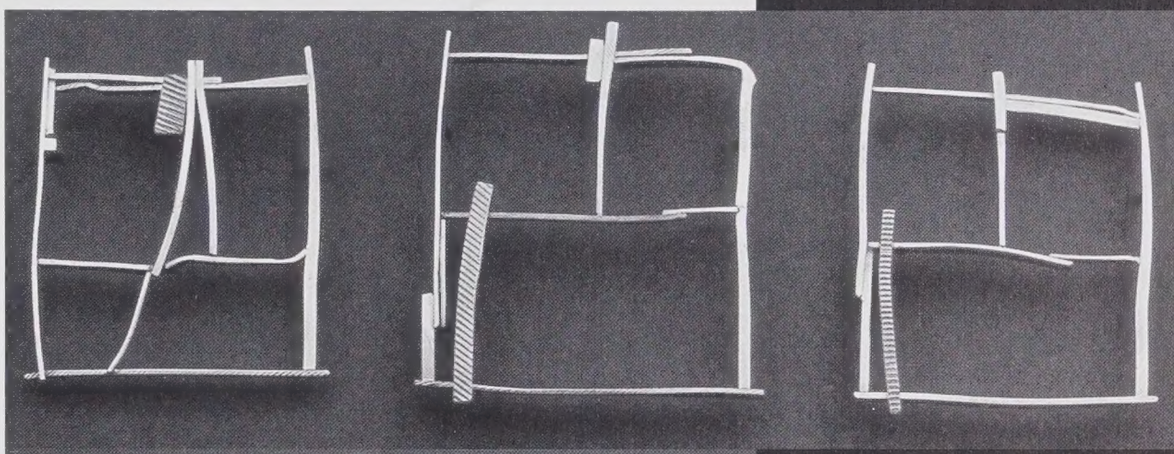
Micki Lippe Jewelry

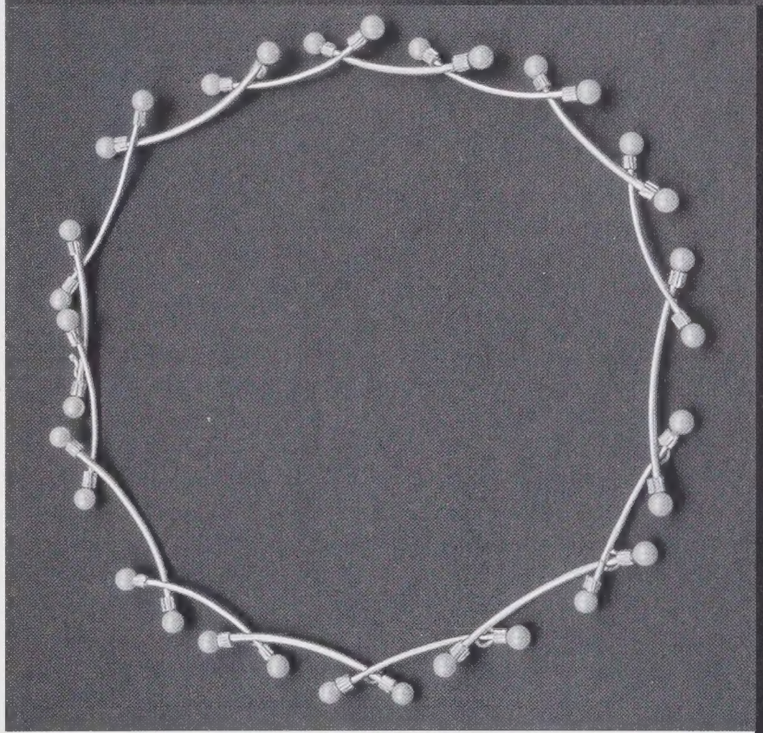
Sybaris Gallery
Royal Oak, Michigan
March 7 – April 18, 1998

text by Nicole Ann DesChamps

Micki Lippe's jewelry has been characterized as abstract and minimal. Her new line of work stresses everyday wearability, and her latest show consisted of earrings, bracelets, brooches, chokers and necklaces. Overall, Lippe's jewelry is traditional in the sense that it exists for body ornamentation.

Several works maintained their representational reference or influence, which allows viewers to link her simplified version with the more detailed source. For example, Lippe captures the essence of clocks and windows in her series of brooches *Time Piece Series* and *Blowin' in the Wind* where she has carefully created objects with subtle variations of line. These linear works were constructed by selectively defining the primary and secondary contours with various shapes and sizes of sterling sheet or wire. As a result, the spaces defined by the wire are important, not only for the interesting shapes they create, but for their contribution to the overall weight of the piece. The ability of each piece to be worn with comfort and ease is inherited from their lightweightedness. To further enhance the line quality, several machined surfaces were altered by hammering or filing the wire edges. As well as simultaneously leaving the mark of the hand, this technique lends a more animated feeling to the series. Lippe's refining ability is equally evident in her *Branch Choker*. This sterling silver piece adorned with pearls incorporated hints of 22k gold. Lippe eloquently refined and reduced the representational detail of the bark and wood until the form matured into a highly resolved simplified interpretation which still allows the viewer to embrace the inspiration for the work: the branch. Yet throughout the transformation and development of her pieces, Lippe never lost sight of her intent—jewelry is meant to be worn.





top
Blowin in the Wind (brooch series)
22k, sterling
2 x 2"

left
Branch Choker
22k, pearls, sterling

Along with the above mentioned jewelry, Lippe provided us with a body of work that appears to have evolved even further. Devoid of extraneous imagery and recognizable symbols, these pieces evolved into more basic shapes including circles, squares and rectangles. These geometric pieces primarily made of sterling silver, 22k gold and copper were, at times, generously accented with semi- and non-precious stones and materials. These components strung onto chains were free to rotate as well as move along the chain. This dynamic motion augments the wearer's and viewer's experiences with the work. As opposed to complex and highly technical pieces which can intimidate viewers, Lippe's incorporation of simple geometric shapes and active components invites the viewer to come in for a closer look and to touch as well. This is the case with the spherical, cylindrical, oval, and circular shapes exhibited in her *Inspired by the Ancients* necklace accented by red and Dalmatian jasper and onyx. The individuality of each piece seems to rely equally upon its components, and it is the juxtaposition of materials and components which make each piece. Think about removing a component or switching two components: the piece would look different, but would it look any less resolved? The preferences between the various permutations is attributed to personal aesthetic.

These wearer-friendly works form a relationship with the wearer through their comfort, agility, and everyday-wearability. For instance, Lippe's triptychs, a name given to her necklaces sold in threes, are affordable while they enable the wearer to sport seven different combinations.

In today's diverse environment, cultures are rich in uniqueness and self-awareness. Living in a society with a hunger for individual desires and needs, the enormous burdens of today's daily expectations intensify the need for self-appreciation. Lippe's work satisfies this hunger for individuality by creating jewelry that engages with the wearer by adorning the body in a manner which is unique to the individual. With comfort and ease, her work conforms to the body and allows for fluid movement. More importantly, Lippe's jewelry does not require a special occasion to be worn or appreciated, but rather has the ability to enhance the daily routine.

Nicole Ann DesChamps is a writer and metalsmith who lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

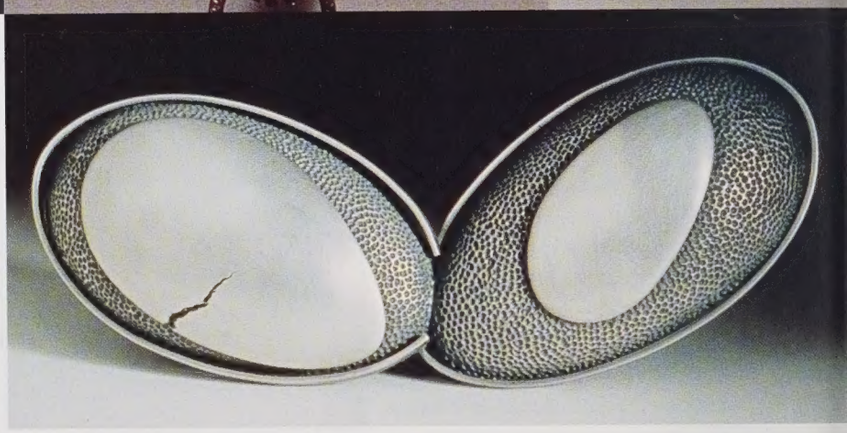
Revelations: New Jewelry by Members of the Society of North American Goldsmiths

National Ornamental Metal Museum

Memphis, Tennessee
November 23, 1997 - February 1, 1998

text by Linda L. Raiteri

review



top left
Jamie Kimmel
Chatelaine, 1995
sterling silver
36 x 1"

top right
Sandra Enterline
Maruwa Pendant, 1994
sterling, quail egg, steel
$1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{8}$"

bottom
Robin Kraft
Suspicion, 1995
sterling, brass, fossils
$2\frac{1}{2} \times 6 \times 1$"

The National Ornamental Metal Museum is the first American venue for this exhibition which opened at the Shipley Gallery in Gateshead, England in 1996 under the title *American Revelations: New Jewellery by Members of the Society of North American Goldsmiths*. The inaugural activity of "Jewellers Exchange '96 - The International Dimension," a professional conference, the exhibit was part of a year-long celebration of the visual arts hosted by the North of England. Juror Richard Mawdsley, head of the metals department at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, chose eighty works created by fifty-six metal artists which exemplified "not only the finest jewelry made by SNAG members, but that which reflects their refined technical virtuosity and celebrates the beauty of traditional material and processes."

Kiff Slemmons emphasizes the functional origin of jewelry in Penannular. The form is that of a medieval clothing fastener. A sharpened pencil replaces the pin; erasers replace precious stones. Yet, the aesthetic is undiminished.

Pierre Cavalan's *Order of Alice*, an assemblage of found objects, uses the form of a military medal to express an entirely feminine sensibility. A decidedly Victorian aesthetic is also expressed in Richard Mawdsley's *Garden Wall*, Kate Wagle's brooch, *On My Mother's Shoulders*, and Roberta Williamson's bird faces in *Gentle Friend*.

The body-mind connection is explored explicitly in several pieces. Julia M. Barello's necklace, *Adornments: Cellulitis of the Neck*, repeats in sterling silver and 24k plate the anatomical interior of the area of the thorax which this necklace, when worn, would cover. In her brooch *Suspicion*, Robin Kraft uses elongated eyes of silver, copper, brass, and fossils to represent the cellular deterioration brought about by cancer.

On those days when you feel absolutely run over, you can announce it to the world by wearing a Boris Bally brooch from the series, *Tread Wear*. The square silver brooches are imprinted with the pattern of tire treads.

In her serenely beautiful *Night Sky Brooch*, Mary Krimendahl uses opal, tourmaline, diamond, silver, and gold to recreate moon and star over the city. Bruce Metcalf has shaped carved maple and birch into five inch gold-leafed earth workers, joyful nurturers. *Wood Pin #107* shovels the earth while sprouting leaves from his neck. *Wood Pin #112* carries bags of seeds in her hands.

For warmth of feeling, nothing in the show compares with Patricia Telesco's *Series XXVI No. 3*, a small rectangular pin of bronze, nickel and gold which glows cozy and intimate as a fireplace on Christmas Eve.

There is a key ring pendant by Rachel Thiewes and a modern silver chatelaine with a pouch for lip balm by Jamie Kimmel. Sandra Enterline has crafted cylinders for protecting quail eggs. Keith Lewis's neckpiece, *Naked Blue Pimply Fat Guy*, is definitely worth a look.

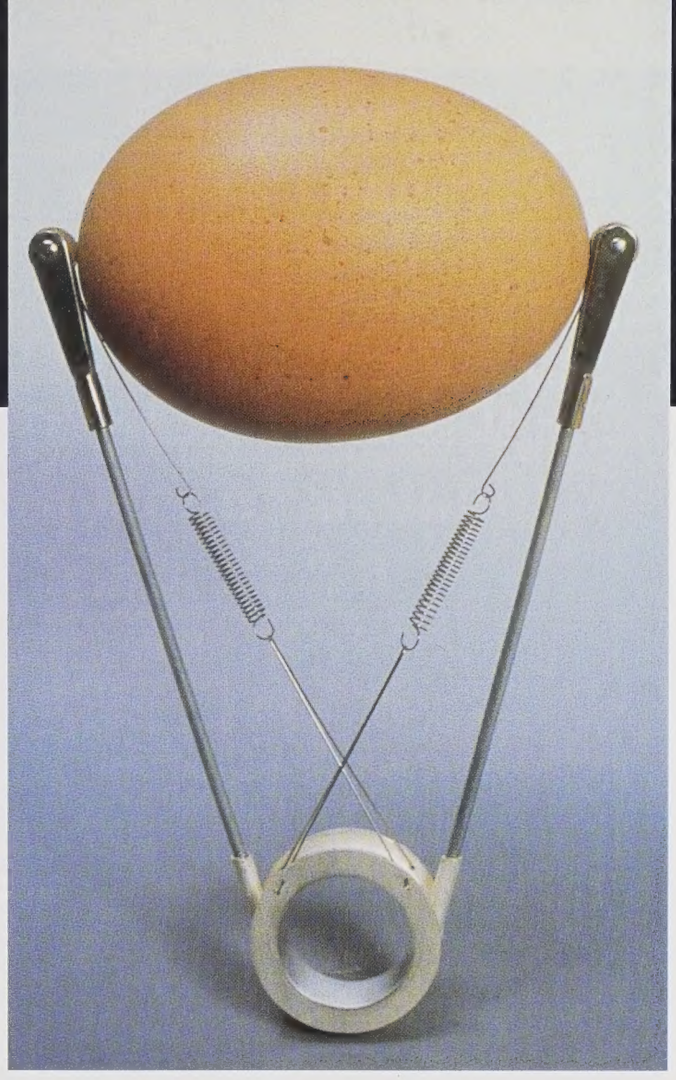
This exhibit highlights the versatility and virtuosity of contemporary American metal artists as they explore design, technique, and their ability to communicate through adornment. Mawdsley has chosen well.

Linda L. Raiteri is a writer who lives in Memphis, Tennessee.

Nordic Jewellery

York Quay Gallery
Harbourfront Centre, Toronto
June 6 - July 6, 1997

text by Barbara Isherwood



above
Sigurd Bronger (Norway)
Ring, 1996
egg shell, steel, silver
$2^3/_8$" h

This touring version of the first Nordic Jewellery Trienniale, first seen at Copenhagen's Museum of Crafts in February of 1996, gave Toronto residents a rare opportunity to see contemporary work by twenty-five jewellers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland.

The goal of the exhibition's curator, Danish art historian Lise Funder, was to dispel the notion of a single Nordic culture, through highlighting trends within each of the countries represented. As the original show included twice as many jewellers, (all illustrated in the full colour exhibition catalogue), some of the context for this theme was lost in the paring down process. However this is a minor quibble in view of the show's overview of a diverse array of well-crafted, conceptually strong work that has evolved far from the so-called Scandinavian design revolution of the 1950s.

Funder notes the impact of the "new jewellery" in Norway, and the pieces shown here were correspondingly colourful and expressionistic, with a predilection for alternative materials and a witty bent (the uncategorizable jewellery of preeminent Norwegian Tone Vigeland was not included in the touring show). Dutch-trained Sigurd Bronger has a penchant for conceptual puns, his egg rings offering amusing contrasts of fragile and durable, organic and manufactured, oval and angular.

Hilde E. Dramstad photo engraves patterns onto tombac, a type of brass whose strength allows for very thin layers. In her brooch *Sick Girl*, a pock-marked pink tongue sticks out from a red sunburst mouth, in a cheeky combination of post-modern design and irony.

The sculptural capacities of wood are well exploited by a number of Norwegian jewellers, who in general favour three dimensional forms. A colossal painted birch collar by Elsie Ann Hochlin is punctuated by flaming blossoms that protect the wearer and threaten the viewer. Lillan Eliassen's carved brooch, *I have kissed so many frogs* is a grown-up interpretation of a fairy tale, with silver-toed frogs legs disappearing down a scarlet mouth. The snake-like contour of Liv Blåvarp's lustrous neckpiece in contrasting shades of ebony, cocobolo and lemon tree was accentuated by a vertical installation.

The Finnish jewellery, which Funder accurately characterizes as materials-based, displayed a particularly individual sensibility, perhaps a result of that country's geographical isolation. Janna Syvänoja's necklace of fish scales threaded on horse hair appears as ephemeral as a summer breeze. In contrast, Ari Turunen surmounts an unpolished, sparsely pierced marble square with a small crescent-shaped jasper, in one of a series of brooches that bear the silent authority of their ageless material. A more playful attitude emerges in Helena Lehtinen's formidably-sized found object brooches, assembled from fragments of gilded picture frames wrapped with silver wire onto rusted iron stakes, and embellished with pearls. Juhani Heikkilä broken new ground with a series of charming miniature silver busts he calls "pocket jewellery."

Iceland's sole representative, Ofeigur Björnsson, contributed three organically-inspired pierced and patinated copper brooches that reflect the terrain of his homeland.

The jewellery from Denmark Funder views as more closely tied to function, with an emphasis on line and form, an apt description for Thorkild Thøgersen's exuberant bent silver wire necklace, which resembled an unravelled spirograph design. The Danes were also the most restrained in terms of material and palette, with muted colours provided by metal, as in the coloured silver geometric constructions of Karen Ihle and Jens Eliasen, or the rich, rough tones of oxidized silver, lacquer and gilt lozenges, strung like vertebrae in a brooch by Anette Kraen.

The iconoclast in the midst of this formalism was Torben Hardenberg, a romantic whose influences range from Mannerist sculpture to spermatozoa, gold versions of which squiggle around a diamond in the centre of his brooch, *The Secret of Life*.

Sweden's representation was eclectic, ranging from the rigorous constructivism of Lena Bergestad Jonsson's titanium bracelets, to Peter de Wit's elegantly simple juxtapositions of gilt silver rectangles and squares with polished stone cubes, to the obsessively decorative work of Christer G. Jonsson, whose *Dance Macabre* is more akin to a miniature shrine than a brooch, its enamelled inner sanctuary entwined with oxidized and gilt silver vines, pearls, obsidian, and tiny skeletons.

One of the most engaging aspects of this exhibition was its installation within a cultural facility that attracts a broad audience. Comments overheard while in the exhibition indicated intrigue and delight at the new forms encountered, although the gallery attendant reported that one incensed viewer demanded to know how Syvänoja's lambswool and wheat collar could be considered jewellery. The fact that he was even prompted to ponder the question illustrates the benefits of bringing this work into the public arena.

Barbara Isherwood is a Toronto-based freelance writer with a Masters degree in Art History.

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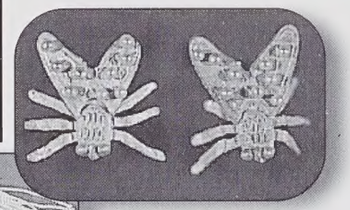

Sterling Silver, 18k gold, and pearls from Toga ™, Darcy Miro, 1997

Sterling Silver necklace, pearls from Toga ™, silk cord. Darcy Miro, 1997

Pearl Strands:
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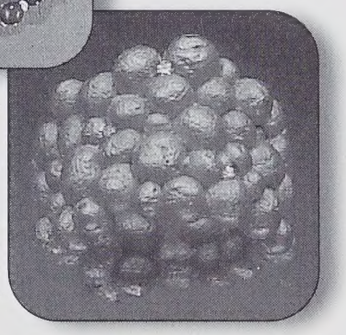
South Sea - Round, off-round, baroque
Tahitian

Loose Pearls:
2mm to 10mm
Pairs, Un-drilled, Full-Drilled, * drilled
Half-pearls
Oriental pearls
Natural seed pearls
Blue, Gray, Black, (natural & treated)
Biwa & Fresh water: rice shapes, off-round, and natural colors(also available in strands)
South Sea & Tahitian: Round, Off-Round, Baroque

Loose Diamonds:
Round brilliants from 1pt. and up
Emerald cut, Princess cut, Radiants, Square, Pear Shapes, Half-moons



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18k gold ring with green diamonds from Maurice Goldman & Sons, Inc. Darcy Miro, 1997

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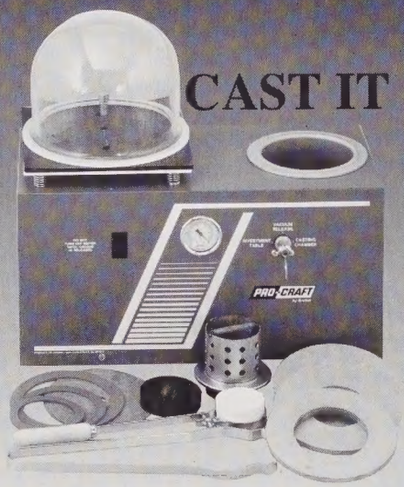

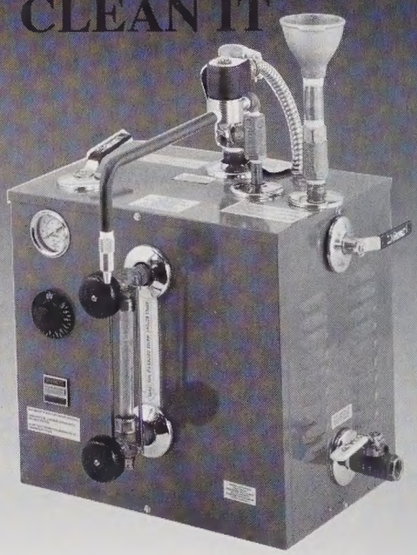

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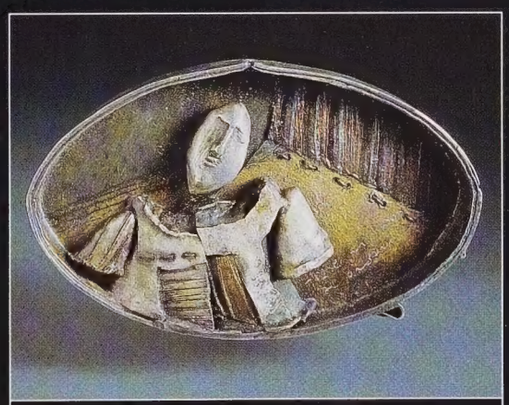

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Conference Fees: SNAG* members $190, non-members $255, student members $140, student non-members $190. Details will be included in the registration brochure.

Meal Plan: An optional meal plan with 3 breakfasts and 2 lunches is available for $82. (vegetarian available.) Details will be included in the registration brochure.

St. Louis Frontenac Hilton Hotel Rates: The hotel will provide the following rates for members attending the 1999 SNAG Conference. Single/Double: $110, Triple/Quad: $110, Executive Suites/Concierge: $130. call toll free 800-445-8667. More details will be included in the registration brochure.

Air Travel Arrangements For information on special rates call Carlson Wagonlit/Jan's Travel Ltd. toll free 800-444-1373. (Do not make airline reservations until you receive your 1999 Conference confirmation in writing.)

Pre & Post Conference Workshops: • Elizabeth Brim, *Basic Blacksmithing plus Inflatable Forming* • Rick Smith, *Patterned Steel and sheet* • Doug Harling, *Granulation* • Fred Fenster, *Pewtersmithing* • Chuck Evans, *Aluminum Anodizing* • Munya Upin, *Metal Weaving* • Betty Helen Longhi, *Creating by Forming Metal* • Elliot Pujol, *Patination for the Metalsmith/Sculptor* • Lee Marshal, *Basic DieForming & Advanced DieForming.* More details will be included in the registration brochure.

Presenters:

- Michael Good, Keynote Speaker, Rockport, ME– *"Messages From Overseas"*
- Scott Braznell, Hamden, CT– *"Ronald Hayes Pearson (1924-1996) and the Post World War II Revival of American Silversmithing"*
- Betty Helen Longhi, Winston-Salem, NC– *"Shell Structures: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective"*
- Lisa Gralnick, Rosendale, NY– *"Beauty and the Theory of Relativity"*
- Gavreal Feder, St. Louis, MO – *"An Introduction to Natural Colored Diamonds"*
- Jim Kelso, Worcester, VT– *"Iroe Takazogan- Painting With Metal: Uncovering the Path of Japanese Soft Metal Work"*
- Nicole Ann DesChamps and Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski, Waterford, MI and Ann Arbor, MI– *"A Look Into the Future: The Implementation of Computer Aided Design and Manufacturing for Metalsmiths"*
- Roy Skodnick, Jamaica, NY– *"Copper, Stone and Fire: James Metcalf, Ana Pellicer and the Artisans of Santa Clara del Cobre"*
- Rick Smith, Carbondale, IL– *"Industrial Imagery and Its Influence on Contemporary Iron"*
- Kathleen Eggert, Shorewood, WI– *"Peruvian Metalwork: The Past In The Present"*
- John Behringer, White Plains, NY– *"The New Role of Craft and Industry"*
- Jan Yager, Philadelphia, PA– *"Jan Yager: Another Look at What Came Next"*
- Dennis Nahabetian, Bowling Green, OH– *"Nice Work If You Can Get It"*

Special Exhibitions: • Elleard B. Heffren Inc, *"Messages From Overseas: The New Millennium, International Jewelry Design Exhibition"* • Locus Gallery, *"New Work by Jon Havener"* • Laumeier Sculpture Park, *"Heikki Seppä Retrospective"* and *"Work by Heinz Brummel"* • Craft Alliance Gallery, *"Playful Intent,"* juried by Richard Mawdsley and *"New Work by Joe Muench"* • Anheuser-Busch Gallery at COCA, *"Portraits in Metal,"* curated by Barb Jordan • Washington University, Gallery of Art, *"Blacksmiths: Brent Kington, John Medwedeff, and Rick Smith"* • Southern Illinios University at Edwardsville, University Museum, *"Containment,"* curated by Billie Jean Theide; SIUE Wagner Arts Gallery, *"International Jewelry Exhibition: 10 Days X 10 Years, Turnov, Czech Republic,"* curated by Dr. Miroslav Cogan • Nancy Sachs Gallery, *"Group Exhibit"* • *Washington University, Gallery of Art, "Talismans for the Coming Millennium"* • James Durbin Jewelers, *"Earring Invitational"* • Componere Gallery of Art and Fashion, *"Works in Metal: Barrett Debusk and James Cleland."* • Maryville University, St. Louis, *"In the Palm of Your Hand,"* a national student exhibition. Shuttle service is included for Gallery Night and Laumeier Sculpture Park.

Panel Discussions: Original founders of SNAG: "Reminiscences of the beginning of SNAG," with Heikki Seppä, Brent Kington and Fred Fenster.

Group Gatherings: For *Metalsmith,* educators, professionals, students, metalsmithing guilds, gallery owners and directors.

Special Events: The Pin and Bead Swap with buffet; lunch and Keynote Address; Closing Festivities with banquet, music and Honorary Membership presentation; Vendors Room featuring suppliers of gemstones, tools and equipment, Art and Tool Auction and SNAG Book Department. (For vendor info. and to donate items for the Art and Tool Auction call Susan Sarantos at 401-846-3392. The auction liaison person in St. Louis is Ray Wenneker at 314-567-5480 or rawennek@ix,netcom.com.

A registration brochure will be sent to all SNAG members and METALSMITH subscribers early in 1999, others may request a brochure after January 1, 1999 by calling 630-579-3272.

The above information is subject to change without notice
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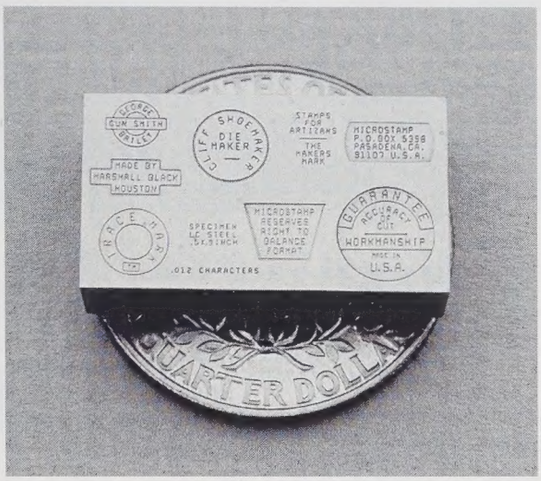

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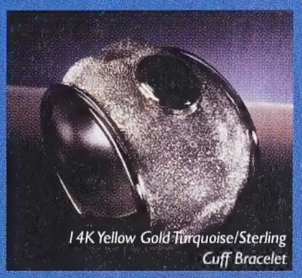
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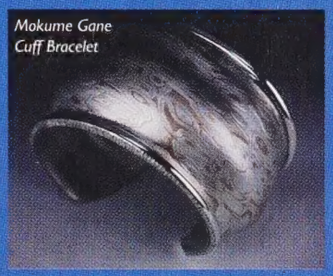
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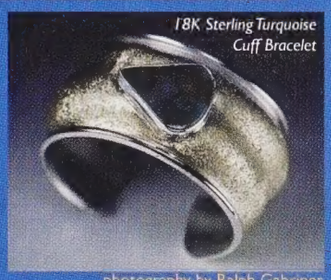
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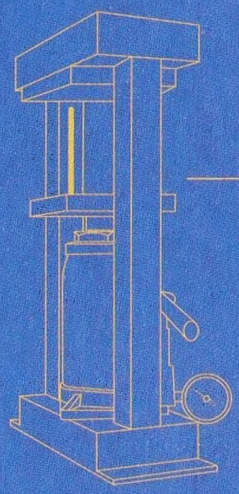

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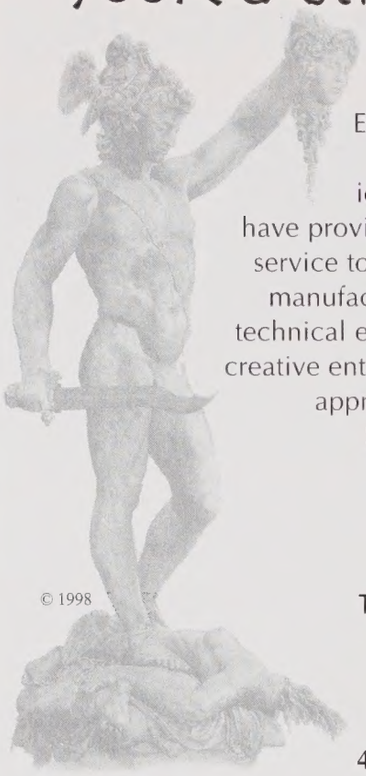

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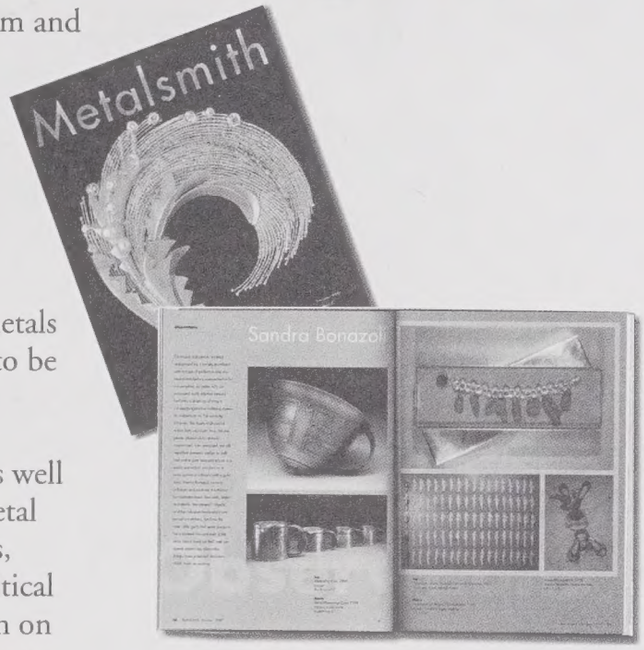

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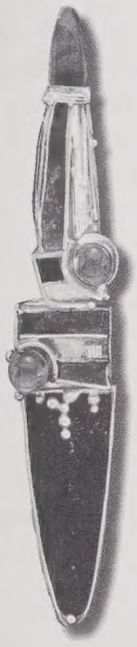

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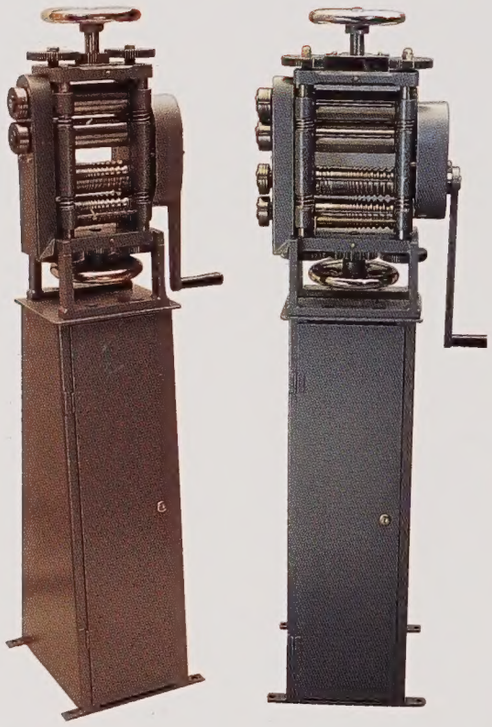

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With stand 128.101
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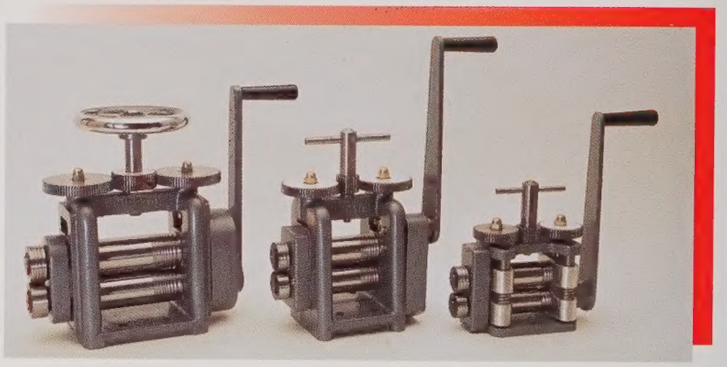

140mm		100mm		80 or 100mm	
Combo	128.118	Combo	128.108	Combo	128.110
Flat	128.119	Flat	128.109	Flat	128.111

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